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LECTURES ON ISAIAH.

LECTURES

ON THE

BOOK OF ISAIAH.

BY

WILLIAM KELLY.

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P R E F A C E.

THE book here presented to the reader consists of notes of lectures on the Prophecy of Isaiah, taken by a young friend, and corrected with considerable additions on the author's part, as compared with the shape in which they were originally given in a periodical. The whole is still far short of what he desires for the exposition of so precious a part of the divine word. Yet he is not without hope that the God of all grace will use the volume, scanty as it is, for the more profitable reading and the enjoyment of many souls, who, like the treasurer of Queen Candace, feel the need of a guide that they may understand what they read. That the Holy Spirit may be pleased to bless what is of Himself, and that every word not of Him may be forgiven and vanish into its own nothingness, is the prayer of the author.

CHELTENHAM, *July, 1871.*

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LECTURES ON ISAIAH.

INTRODUCTION.

It is proposed in the following work to communicate some remarks on the most comprehensive as well as the grandest of all the prophets. Even if they contribute scarcely more than a copious table of contents, there are hearts thankful for the least real help to the better understanding of the word of God. This object will be gained not by occupying the reader with the thoughts of man, but by furnishing suggestions which necessarily lead back to holy scripture, and derive any little interest or value they may possess from that word which lives and abides for ever.

Of the manner and style of Isaiah others have spoken largely. If little be said of this, it is not that the warmest expression of praise seems to me overcharged, but because I consider it needless, at least for such as are likely to read these pages. The following extract—cited by another from Ewald's *Propheten* (i. 166—179)—suffices to prove the estimate formed by a man of taste, ability, and learning, who may be considered by some the less biassed as he rejected inspiration in its scriptural sense:—

“In Isaiah we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Everything conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no prophet either before or after could as writer attain. Among the other prophets, each of the more important ones is distinguished by some one particular excellence, and

some one peculiar talent : in Isaiah all kinds of talents and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together so as mutually to temper and qualify each other ; it is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him as the symmetry of the whole.

" We cannot fail to assume, as the first condition of Isaiah's historical greatness, a native power and a vivacity of spirit, which, even among prophets, is seldom to be met with. It is but rarely that we see combined in one and the same spirit the three several characteristics of, first, the most profound prophetic excitement and the purest sentiment; next, the most indefatigable and successful practical activity amidst all perplexities and changes of outward life; and, thirdly, that facility and beauty in representing thought which is the prerogative of the genuine poet : but this threefold combination we find realized in Isaiah as in no other prophet ; and from the traces which we can perceive of the unceasing joint-working of these three powers, we must draw our conclusions as to the original greatness of his genius. Both as prophet and as author, Isaiah stands upon that calm sunny height which in each several branch of ancient literature one eminently favoured spirit at the right time takes possession of ; which seems, as it were, to have been waiting for him ; and which, when he has come and mounted the ascent, seems to keep and guard him to the last as its own right man. In the sentiments which he expresses, in the topics of his discourses, and in the manner of expression, Isaiah uniformly reveals himself as the kingly prophet.

" In reference to the last named point, it cannot be said that his manner of representing thought is elaborate and artificial : it rather shows a lofty simplicity and an unconcern about external attractiveness, abandoning itself freely to the leading and requirement of each several thought ; but, nevertheless, it always rolls along in a full stream which overpowers all resistance, and never fails at the right place to accomplish at every turn its object without toil or effort.

" The progress and development of the discourse is always majestic, achieving much with few words, which, though short,

are yet clear and transparent; an overflowing, swelling fulness of thought, which might readily lose itself in the vast and indefinite, but which always at the right time collects and tempers its exuberance; to the bottom exhausting the thought and completing the utterance, and yet never too diffuse. This severe self-control is the most admirably seen in those shorter utterances, which, by briefly sketched images and thoughts, give us the vague apprehension of something infinite, while nevertheless they stand before us complete in themselves and clearly delineated, *e.g.* viii. 6, ix. 6, xiv. 29—32, xviii. 1—7, xxi. 11, 12; while in the long piece, xxviii.—xxx., if the composition here and there for a moment languishes, it is only to lift itself up again afresh with all the greater might. In this rich and thickly crowded fulness of thought and word, it is but seldom that the simile which is employed appears apart to set forth and complete itself (xxxi. 4, 5); in general, it crowds into the delineation of the object which it is meant to illustrate, and is swallowed up in it—aye, and frequently simile after simile—and yet the many threads of the discourse, which for a moment appeared ravelled together, soon disentangle themselves into perfect clearness, a characteristic which belongs to this prophet alone, a freedom of language with which no one else so easily succeeds.

“The versification in like manner is always full, and yet strongly marked: while, however, this prophet is little concerned about anxiously weighing out to each verse its proper number of words, not unfrequently he repeats the same word in two members (xxxi. 5, xxxii. 17, xi. 5, xix. 13), as if, with so much power and beauty in the matter within, he did not so much require a painstaking finish in the outside. The structure of the strophe is always easy and beautifully rounded.

“Still the main point lies here—that we cannot in the case of Isaiah, as in that of other prophets, specify any particular peculiarity, or any favourite colour as attaching to the general style. He is not the especially lyrical prophet, or the especially elegiacal prophet, or the especially oratorical and hortatory prophet, as we should describe a Joel, a Hosea, a Micah, with

whom there is a greater prevalence of some particular colour; but, just as the subject requires, he has readily at command every several kind of style and every several change of delineation; and it is precisely this that, in point of language, establishes his greatness, as well as in general forms one of his most towering points of excellence. His only fundamental peculiarity is the lofty majestic calmness of his style, proceeding out of the perfect command which he feels he possesses over his subject-matter. This calmness however no way demands that the strain shall not, when occasion requires, be more vehemently excited, and assail the hearer with mightier blows; but even the extremest excitement, which does here and there intervene, is in the main bridled still by the same spirit of calmness, and, not overstepping the limits which that spirit assigns, it soon with lofty self-control returns back to its wonted tone of equability (ii. 10; iii.; xxviii. 11—23; xxix. 9—14). Neither does this calmness in discourse require that the subject shall always be treated only in a plain level way, without any variation of form; rather Isaiah shows himself master in just that variety of manner which suits the relation in which his hearers stand to the matter now in hand. If he wishes to bring home to their minds a distant truth which they like not to hear, and to judge them by a sentence pronounced by their own mouth, he retreats back into a popular statement of a case drawn from ordinary life (v. 1—6; xxviii. 23—29). If he will draw the attention of the over-wise to some new truth, or to some future prospect, he surprises them by a brief oracle clothed in an enigmatical dress, leaving it to their penetration to discover its solution (viii. 14—16; xxix. 1—8). When the unhappy temper of men's minds, which nothing can amend, leads to loud lamentation, his speech becomes for a while the strain of elegy and lament (i. 21—23; xxii. 4, 5). Do the frivolous leaders of the people mock?—he outdoes them at their own weapons, and crushes them under the fearful earnest of divine mockery (xxviii. 10—13). Even a single ironical word in passing will drop from the lofty prophet (xvii. 3, *glory*). Thus his discourse varies into every complexion: it is tender

and stern, didactic and threatening, mourning, and again exulting in divine joy, mocking and earnest; but ever at the right time it returns back to its original elevation and repose, and never loses the clear ground-colour of its divine seriousness."

It is more to our purpose to consider briefly the general structure, or, at any rate, the chief parts and divisions of this prophecy. There is an appearance of disorder in the arrangement of the book as it now stands; and many of those who have commented on it have complained and suggested their rectifications. For my part I see no sufficient reason to doubt that, under the semblance of confusion here as elsewhere in scripture, we have a deeper system than one of time or circumstance. Thus, in the Book of Exodus, the ritual for the consecration of the priests comes in abruptly in chapters xxviii. and xxix., after the Spirit of God has given part of the account of the sanctuary and its vessels, and before He supplies the rest. And yet this seeming interruption subserves, as nothing else could, the moral object of the Spirit, which would have been frustrated by a merely obvious and mechanical arrangement, to which most minds are so prone. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men."

So in the earliest division of our prophet, which embraces the first twelve chapters, we have the preface of chapter i. followed by chapters ii.—iv., which dwell on "the day of Jehovah." Then comes chapter v., "the song of my beloved touching his vineyard." Now it is evident that this strain (proving by repeated instances that, for all yet done, Jehovah's anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still) is interrupted by chapters vi.—ix. 7; after which episode it is resumed till we have the close in the destruction of the Assyrian, the reign of Messiah, and Israel's joy and praise (chap. x.—xii.) "in that day" once more.

Now we have no date to this "song," but we have both to chapter vi. and also to chapters vii., viii. Chapter vi. may have been revealed before the song, as many suppose it to have been the first vision the prophet ever had. This I neither

affirm nor deny, not seeing sufficient evidence in the word or in the nature of the case to warrant either conclusion. But it seems plain that there is a moral order of divine beauty in the collocation as the chapters now stand. Chapter v. is the case stated between Jehovah and His vineyard, and shows Israel tested by the painstaking care God had all through bestowed upon them. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" He can only thence-forward lay it waste, though His vineyard be the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant. Worse woe follows woe; and God summons the nations from far to chasten His people, over whose land hung darkness and sorrow. Then, before the conclusion of these judgments on stricken Israel given in chapter x., we have Israel tested in a wholly different way in chapter vi. For we have there the glory of Jehovah-Messiah manifested (compare John xii.), the people blinded judicially for their unbelief, and an elect remnant withal which did not appear in the preceding chapter. Thus, if chapter v. convicts Israel on the count of their ill-return to all God's past good and faithful care, chapter vi. condemns them yet more, whatever grace may do spite of all, by the manifestation of Jehovah's glory in the person of Christ. This accordingly leads to a lengthening out of the interruption, which shows us Immanuel, the virgin's child, on the judgment of the Assyrian, spite of desolation inflicted by him for a time, and the complete deliverance of Israel and their establishment under the Messiah AFTER the day when He was a stone of stumbling to them and the law was sealed among His disciples.

Then, as we have seen, the broken links of chapter v. are taken up again from chapter ix. 8, and the general history of the nation renews its course, after we have had from first to last the special account of the Messiah, His rejection by the Jews, and the final blessing under His reign. The resumption, after so complete and weighty an episode, is made most evident, because the Spirit of God goes back to the very struggles of the prophet's day and the judgment of Israel. In chapter x. the indignation of Jehovah against Israel ceases in the

destruction of their last foe, the Assyrian. Lastly in chapter xi. we have the Messiah again shown, first in His moral ways, and then in His kingdom, followed by Israel's song of praise, in the millennial day (chap. xii.).

The second great division comprehends chapters xiii.—xxvii.; but, like the first, it admits of various sub-divisions or separate subjects within itself. Thus in chapters xiii. xiv. we have the fall of Babylon and the overthrow of the Assyrian, with Palestina dissolved, terminating in mercy to Israel and the establishment of Zion. This clearly indicates that the last days are in question both for judgment and for deliverance, whatever preliminary accomplishment in the past may have borne witness to the truth of the prophecy. But that which has been falls so short of all that is involved as to evince itself but the shadow which the coming events cast before them. Next follows "the burden of Moab" in chapters xv. xvi. Then in chapter xvii. comes "the burden of Damascus;" but just as proud Moab must stoop before Him who sits on the throne in the tabernacle of David, so the mighty rushing waters of the nations shall avail as little to sustain Damascus as to overwhelm Israel, though at the lowest ebb, when they look to their Jehovah God, and He rebukes the oppressor. The next chapter (xviii.) may be viewed in connexion with chap. xvii. Nevertheless it has its own special place, as showing us Israel restored, not by Jehovah at first, but by the influence and intervention of a maritime power. But this policy and its promising fruit come all to nothing, and the nations plunder and oppress as before, and Jehovah takes up Israel, and works in His own grace and might. We have "burdens" after this, but they are not quite similarly presented after this great gathering of nations seen at the end of chapter xvii. But first in chapters xix. and xx. Egypt is judged (the Assyrian being the instrument) before its final blessing. Again in chapter xxi., we have the "burden of the desert of the sea," by which is set forth the capture of Babylon; "the burden of Dumah," and that upon Arabia. Then in chapter xxii. "the burden of the valley of vision," Jerusalem itself is taken;

and Shebna is set aside for Eliakim, the type of Antichrist overthrown, and the government of David's house being transferred to the true Christ. In chapter xxiii. Tyre's burden comes before us. Then in chapter xxiv. Jehovah is seen dealing with the earth, and the world languishes before His mighty hand. There is more than this, for it is the hour of His visitation for the host of the high ones on high, as well as for the kings of the earth on the earth: indeed the day is come for His reign in Zion and Jerusalem. Can one wonder then that chapters xxv.—xxvii. are the sequel for Israel's songs of victory, celebrating God and His character, and their deliverance and its character also? A song of joy closed the first division, a song of praise closed the second; and as we had in the first part the sorrowful song of the beloved to His vineyard, fruitful only in sin and shame, now all is changed; and "in that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine: I Jehovah do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day."

It is evident that, as compared with the first division (i.—xii.), the second (xiii.—xxvii.) embraces a sphere incomparably larger: the first being occupied mainly with Israel; the second beginning with the great power that ravaged and ruled Judah, going on with each of the nations that had relations with Israel, and ending with the judgment of all nations, when the world is dealt with and the very powers of the heavens are shaken too, but when Israel, sifted and chastened, is gathered in at the great trumpet blast to worship Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem.

The third division is occupied with the details of that which happens to Israel at the end of the age. Chaps. xxviii. and xxix. give us the two final assaults on Jerusalem: the first of these, coming from the north and overwhelming Ephraim in its course, is successful against the guilty city, spite of (rather because of) its covenant with death; the second, when all seems lost, suddenly brings Jehovah of hosts to their rescue, and the multitude of the hostile strangers of all nations pass away as a dream. In chaps. xxx. and xxxi. the unbelief that

sought unto Egypt is judged, and the Assyrian, its scourge, the mighty leader of the coalition against Israel, falls under God's hand. Then in chap. xxxii. Messiah is seen reigning in righteousness, and the last pre-millennial effort of the enemy (chap. xxxiii.) is turned to his own destruction, and divine vengeance takes its course in Edom on all the other haters of Israel (chap. xxxiv.). Thereon the blessing is now so rich and all pervading, that the wilderness itself rejoices for Israel, and blossoms as the rose: sorrow and sighing flee away. God is come with a recompense, and His ransomed ones are come to Zion with songs, everlasting joy upon their heads. Such is the fitting conclusion in chap. xxxv.

The fourth division consists of the historical matter intercalated between what may be called the first and second volumes of our prophecy. These are their main facts: the historical Assyrian rebuked of God before Jerusalem (chaps. xxxvi., xxxvii.); the raising up again of the Son of David, who was sick unto death (chap. xxxviii.); and the solemn intimation of the Babylonish captivity (chap. xxxix.).

After this transitional series of events, and founded on their weighty moral import, we have the remainder of the book (chaps. xl.—lxvi.) parting into the fifth, sixth, and seventh divisions. The two great controversies of God with His people are here brought to issue with a conclusion to the entire book.

The first is idolatry (chaps. xl.—xlviii.), which Cyrus avenged in the overthrow of Babylon, whither the guilty Jews had been carried, alas! because of their desertion of Jehovah for idols of the Gentiles. But providentially raised up as Cyrus was, God points to His servant who shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. After this however the promised Messiah is dropped for the present. Israel meanwhile had the responsibility of being Jehovah's servant, but Israel was blind. Therefore had He given them up for a prey; but now they are delivered, the fall of Babylon being the pledge of a still mightier deliverance yet to come. This closes with chap. xlviii.

In chap. xl ix. the second and still graver controversy opens—the rejection of the true servant, even the Messiah. This makes way for a blessing to the Gentiles in the wisdom and grace of God, the raising up of Jacob being now counted a light thing. “I will *also* give thee for light to the Gentiles.” Zion however shall never be forgotten, but be restored. This again closes with chap. lvii. (Compare its last verse with the last verse of the preceding part, namely chap. xl viii. 22.)

Chapters lviii.—lxvi. are the conclusion. This, and indeed the whole of what we have called the second volume, are second to no other part in magnificence, interest, and practical profit.* The contents of the last part may be thus summed up. The Holy Spirit directs Himself (in chaps. lviii., lix.) to the conscience of Israel—reasons, if one may so say, of righteousness,

* The following extract from the same rationalist (*Propheten* ii. 407—409), who attributes the last twenty-seven chapters, not to Isaiah, but to what he calls “the Great Unnamed,” may not be without interest:—“Creative as this prophet is in his views and thoughts, he is not less peculiar and new in his language, which at times is highly (!) inspired, and carries away the reader with a wonderful power.

“Although after the general manner of the later prophets, the discourse is apt to be too diffuse in delineation; yet, on the other side, it often moves confusedly and heavily, owing to the overgushing fulness of fresh thoughts continually streaming in. But whenever it rises to a higher strain, as e.g. xl.—xlvi. 1—4, it then attains to such a pure luminous sublimity, and carries the hearer away with such a wonderful charm of diction, that one might be ready to fancy he was listening to another prophet altogether, if other grounds did not convince us that it is one and the same prophet speaking, only in different moods of feeling.

“In no prophet does the record in the composition of particular passages so much vary, as throughout the three several sections into which this part of the book is divided; while under vehement excitement, the prophet pursues the most diverse objects. It is his business at different times to comfort, to exhort, to shame, to chasten; to show, as out of heaven, the heavenly image of the Servant of the Lord, and, in contrast, to scourge the folly and base grovelling of image-worship; to teach what conduct the times require, and to rebuke those who linger behind the occasion, and then also to draw them along by his own example—his prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving, thus smoothing for them the approach to the exalted object of the New Time. Thus the complexion of the style, though hardly anywhere passing into the representation of visions properly so called, varies in a constant interchange; and rightly to recognise these changes is the great problem for the interpretation.”

temperance, and judgment to come. Their hypocrisy was the hindrance to their blessing, and their sin would bring on their punishment. Yet when all hope of salvation might justly be taken away, the Redeemer would come to Zion in his own sovereign mercy, and His Spirit and His word abide with Israel and their seed for ever. Chapter lx. most appropriately reveals their consequent glory and righteous condition. Next chapters lxi.—lxiii. 1—6 form a section in which the character of Jehovah-Messiah is traced from His first advent in grace (with the blessing and glory He was ready and able to bestow on the people and their land), till He returns from the scene of the judgment executed in Edom, "the day of vengeance of our God." Then from chapter lxiii. 7 to the end of lxiv. the prophet goes out to Jehovah in earnest intercession for His people, finding an only hope in His mercy and faithfulness. The last two chapters (lxv., lxvi.) are the answer of Jehovah, who explains His dealings throughout; His grace to the Gentiles, His long-suffering toward Israel (rebellious and yet to return to their old idolatry and worse); His sure rejection and judgment of the mass, but with an elect remnant spared; the introduction of His glory in the new creation, of which Jerusalem is the destined earthly centre; a reiteration of His sympathy with the elect and of the vengeance He must take on the abominations of the latter day, when, if He suddenly bless Zion, He will as suddenly come and plead by fire and sword with all flesh. After this judgment of the quick, the spared shall go forth and declare (not His grace but) His glory, and all the dispersed of Israel shall be brought back, and all flesh too shall worship before Jehovah, with the solemn permanent witness before their eyes of the doom of apostates. Such is the general scope, such the special divisional character, of Isaiah the prophet.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is no doubt that the Holy Ghost treats of Israel, more particularly of Judah and Jerusalem, throughout the visions of Isaiah. Often, it is true, we hear of judgments on the Gentiles, sometimes of divine grace toward them; and this last not merely when Israel shall be the centre of blessing for the earth, but even while, as now, the Jews are set aside for a season. Still it is certain from the express language of the prophet, that the book, as a whole, applies to God's ancient people, and not to the church of the firstborn.

Nevertheless, all scripture being alike from God, we shall find the most precious instruction here as elsewhere, humbling lessons for the heart of man, and on God's part unfailing mercy, goodness, and patience, but withal solemn sure judgment of all evil. Everywhere and at all times God's glory shines out to the eye of faith, as it will to "every eye" in a day which hastens fast. But the only wise God has been pleased to bring out His mind and display His ways in a variety of forms, which create no small perplexity to the narrow mind and unready heart of man. Some are apt to forget the past, as if the revelation of present privilege were all; many more would merge the actual calling of God in a vague amalgam in an unintelligent monotony, which confounds Israel and the church, law and gospel, earth and heaven, grace and glory.

Doubtless now that the Son of God has appeared, it is meet that we should hear Him; and it is vain to talk of knowing the law and prophets, Moses or Elias, if He have not the central and supreme place in our hearts. And it is to hear Him, if we believe that the Spirit of truth is come to guide into all truth; much of which even apostles could not bear, till redemption was accomplished and the Son of man ascended where He was before. It is due therefore to the New Testament that we should look for our special portion there, the revelation of that mystery

which was hid from ages and from generations. But we cannot forget, without dishonour to God and loss to our souls, that there are certain moral principles which never change, any more than God can act or speak beneath Himself, whatever may be His condescension to the creature. Thus obedience is always the right pathway for the faithful, and holiness is inseparable from the new nature; but then the character of the obedience and the depth of the holiness necessarily depend on the measure of light given of God and the power of the motives He reveals for working on the heart. What was allowed in Levitical time and order is largely out of place now, if we heed the Saviour's authority. And this is at least as strikingly true of the public worship and service of God as of private life and duty. In many measures and in many modes He spoke in the prophets to the fathers; now He has spoken in the person of His Son. Hence unbelief assumes the character of resistance to the fullest love, light, authority, and grace, revealed in Him who is the image of the invisible God—Himself God over all, blessed for ever, while the faith which has bowed to Him thus displayed, loves to hear the earlier oracles and to reflect the true light which now shines, along with the fainter but equally divine luminaries which pierced through the darkness of man's night; for all the blessed promises of God are now verified in Christ.

In the prophecy before us God is still dealing with the people as a body; and, therefore, He pleads with them because of their iniquities, setting forth a full, searching, and even minute portraiture of their evil ways. For if prophecy encourages the faithful by the sure word of coming blessing from the Lord, it casts a steady, convicting light on the actual state of those who bear His name; its hopes strengthen those who bow to its holy sentences. Hence, if handled in a godly and reverent manner, it never can be popular, though notions drawn from it and used excitingly may be so. But the Spirit addresses it to the conscience in God's presence, and there is nothing man more shrinks from. Indeed this is the character of prophesying (1 Cor. xiv.) in a measure, as well as of prophetic scripture;

and the Corinthian preference of the more showy sign-gifts told the tale of their own moral condition.

Need it be pointed out particularly how chap. i. illustrates the foregoing remarks? What an expostulation on the part of God! Heaven and earth are summoned to hear His complaint against His guilty people. The dullest of their own beasts of burden put them to shame. In vain had the largest favours been shown them: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Equally vain had been His chastisements. (Ver. 5—9.) Land, cities, inhabitants, all was in the prophet's vision a waste and ruin through sin, with the merest remnant shielded from destruction.

Has not this a voice for us? It is not only that the church of God began to be called out and formed when all was a failure—man, Israel, the world, judged morally in the cross; but, besides, for us, the house of God is in disorder, the last time of many antichrists is long since come. The Christian witness has more deeply and widely departed from God than the Jewish one, and in spite of immensely greater privileges. What remains but judgment for the mass, with the reserve of grace for those who humble themselves under God's mighty hand? Does this produce hardness of feeling? On the contrary a spirit of intercession is the invariable companion of a holy heed to prophecy, the offspring, both of them, of communion with God. He loves His people too well to look with indifference on their sin, of all men; He must vindicate His outraged majesty; and those who are in the secret of His mind cannot but go forth in importunate desire for the good of souls and the glory of the Lord. But real love has no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; rather does it reprove them. Neither does that love which is of God measure sin as nature does, but feels first and most of all that which slights the Lord Himself.

As to Israel, they were worse than the heathen, as bad as the worst. "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." It

was not that they lacked zeal in religion ; it was not that they did not seek a remedy for the evident pravities of their day. But *their* remedies were worse than useless. (Ver. 10—15.) If they approach the doom of Sodom, morally they were Sodom, and their sacrifices, feasts, and assemblies odious to Jehovah, who refused to hear their multiplied prayers. There was no real repentance, no trembling at His word.

Yet Jehovah deigns to call them to repentance, and the fruits suited to it, promising to help them if they were broken down and obedient, and threatening to devour them by the sword if they refused. The universal corruption is then laid bare ; and, finally, the Lord shows He must deal with His adversaries, as well as Himself restore Zion, when idols and their makers perish together under His mighty hand. “Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will be relieved of my adversaries, and take vengeance on my enemies. And I will turn my hand on thee and purge away as with lye thy dross, and take away all thine alloy. And I will restore all thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning : after that shalt thou be called the city of righteousness, the faithful town. Zion shall be redeemed through justice, and her converts through righteousness. But destruction shall come on transgressors and sinners together ; and those that forsake Jehovah shall perish. For they shall be ashamed of the terebinths which ye desired, and ye shall blush for the gardens that ye had chosen. For ye shall be as a terebinth whose leaves wither, and as a garden in which is no water. And the strong man shall become as tow and his work as a spark ; and they shall both burn together, and no one shall quench [them].” The promise as well as the judgment go far beyond the circumstances before and after the Babylonish captivity. The last fiery trial of Israel is in view which grace will use for spiritual refining ; and then will follow the times of restitution of all things, when the former rule shall come to Zion (Micah iv.), the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

CHAPTERS II.—IV.

WE have already seen that, though the people are assured of the blessing of God, if truly repentant, the prophet shows that judgment must be executed first on the wicked: then shall Zion be redeemed of the Lord. This is manifestly distinct from redemption as we know it in Christ. Their deliverance shall be accompanied by divine judgments. Chapter ii. follows this up and predicts thereon, not only the restoration of their judges as at the first, and Jerusalem, called the city of righteousness, but the mountain of Jehovah's house exalted and all nations flowing unto it; "for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not rise against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Ver. 3, 4.)

This is plain, if we are simple. Abandon the context, blot out, if you will, the fact that this portion is prefaced as "the word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem," and all is confusion. No doubt to apply these glorious terms to the feeble remnant's return from the Babylonish captivity refutes itself. But the views of many Christians are not less untenable. What for instance can exceed the poverty of Theodoret's scheme? He tries to find an answer in the flourishing unity of the Roman empire when our Lord first appeared, and the conquered races that composed it being no longer at war but engaged in agriculture and in the unhindered diffusion of the gospel far and wide. Yet one knows nothing better in the attempts of men since, unless the Popish interpretation be thought more homogeneous, inasmuch as it is all supposed to be verified in the Catholic church; certainly the interpretation of others cannot be preferred, which makes it all mystical, and imagines its accomplishment in the

unbroken oneness and peace of all believers, in their perfect holiness, and their entire subjection to the scriptures. As on earth the actual state is far different, some seek consistency with truth, by transferring the scene to heaven, when every conflict is over.

Ignorance of the kingdom of heaven, whether in its manifest form according to the prophets, when the Lord returns to reign in power and glory, or in its mysteries as now running its course while the Lord is seated on the Father's throne and Christendom is the result—in either way ignorance of the kingdom—is the common and fatal fault of most commentators. Hence they fall into the further error of confounding the kingdom with the church or assembly of God, which is fraught with evil consequences both doctrinal and practical. Of this fanatics took advantage, or perhaps by it fell into a snare on the other side; for it is hard to say which were most astray, persecutors or persecuted. In fact, to take an instance from Protestants, whether one thinks of the wild Anabaptists, who tried to set up a Zion by force of arms, or of their more sensible if not more spiritual antagonists who put them down by fire and sword, both went on the mistaken ground of the servants in the parable of the wheat-field, who would root up the tares spite of the Saviour's interdict, instead of leaving that work of judgment to the angels at the end of the age. Popery, as is notorious, has always acted on the same error. Others, shocked by the evident departure of Papists and Protestants alike, fell into the opposite extreme of denying the responsibility of the king and of the magistrate in using the sword. All these serious aberrations of men are due to confounding what ought to be held distinctly but firmly and without confusion—God's external authority in civil government, and God's spiritual power in His assembly, where the Spirit is present to maintain the rights of the Lord according to the written word.

Where these truths are seen, it is not merely that one stands amazed at those Calvin* calls "madmen," who torture this passage to promote anarchy; but at the Genevese chief who chides them for thinking that "it took away from the church

* C. Translation Society Series, Isaiah i. 101, 102.

entirely the right to use the sword," and bringing it forward for condemning with great severity every kind of war. Certainly those Christians were inexcusably wrong who dictated to the powers that be, and interfered with their policy either domestic or foreign. But Calvin was not less in error who claimed for the church the right to use the sword. Mischievous idea! which denies in principle the place of Christ, the place of suffering holiness and love in this present evil world (1 Pet. ii. 20, 21). So the citation by Calvin of Luke xxii. 36 in this connexion is just of a piece with that which we see in Romish controversialists. They are equally mistaken, from not seeing the true nature and calling of the Christian; they are equally mistaken in thinking that it is a question of acknowledging the kingly power of Christ (for He has not yet taken His own throne); they are equally mistaken in fancying we must always think of making progress, and so gradually bring in the perfection of that peaceful reign. Calvin charges it on the revolutionaries as excessive folly to imagine Christ's kingdom in the sense of Isa. ii. consummated. But was it wise in himself to think that it was even beginning? Equally unintelligent and false is his conclusion that "the fulfilment of this prophecy in its full extent must not be looked for on earth;" for it is plain and certain that its terms refer to Christ's future kingdom on earth exclusively, and not to heaven. How important to distinguish difference of dispensation and relationship!

Take all now in its natural import,* and difficulties vanish.

* Those who have access to *La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad, en tres tomos*, Londres, 1826, or the English translation, in two vols., 1827, will read with pleasure the masterly investigation of the author, a pious Roman Catholic, in which he, by the scripture, sets aside the views which had so long reigned through the influence of Origen, Jerome, and others. The Spanish reader is referred to Tom. ii., pp. 478—511, the English to Vol. ii., pp. 174—190, for particular remarks on this very chapter, of which a compressed sample must suffice here. "In the first place I sincerely agree with all the doctors, both Christian and Jewish, that the times of Messiah are manifestly the times spoken of in these prophecies. 'It shall come to pass in the last days:' that is, in the time of Messiah, or of Christ. But this is very equivocal. That time, according to all ancient and modern writers, and according to the fundamental principles of Christianity, is not one only but two

When judgment has done its work, Zion shall be the fountain of divine blessing for all nations, and the centre to which they shall gather, when universal peace prevails, and Jehovah shall

times infinitely diverse from each other : one, which is already past and which continues even till now its effects assuredly great and admirable; another, which has not yet arrived, but which is believed and hoped for with faith and a divine confidence, which second time would appear to be more grand and admirable, according to the scriptures, which are manifestly directed to this and terminate in it. This is the time of which the Prophets have said so much, ‘in that day,’ ‘at that time,’ &c. This is the time of which S. Peter and S. Paul have said so much in their Epistles. And it is the time of which the Messiah Himself has said so much in parables and without them, as may be seen in the Gospels. The first time of Messiah, of which the Prophets speak, is certainly verified already ; and the world has enjoyed, does enjoy, and may to its satisfaction enjoy, its admirable effects ; and yet the prophecies have not been fully verified, for they embrace not only the first time of Messiah, but likewise and still more the second time, which is yet waited for. This is so evident and clear that, according to the different principles or systems, there have been derived two different conclusions ; and though the one be more deadly than the other, they are both none the less for that illegitimate and false.

“First, Therefore the Messiah is not come, because the prophecies have not been accomplished.”

“Secondly, Therefore the prophecies cannot be understood as they speak, but in another better sense—allegorical or spiritual, in which sense they have been and are being verified in the present church.”

“But is it very difficult to discover another conclusion conformed to Scripture ? That is,

“Thirdly, Therefore the prophecies of which we speak, and many others like them, which have not been verified, nor could possibly have been in the first time of the Messiah, may very well and must needs be verified in the second, which time is not less of divine faith than the first.””

After meeting the Jewish objections, as well as the traditional opposition of Christendom, the author replies to the last, which only sees in the day of His second coming a universal judgment of the dead. “But whence was this idea taken ? From the holy scriptures ? Certainly not, for they oppose and contradict it at every step. Therefore we may well hope without any fear that the prophecies spoken of, with countless others like them, will be fully verified according to the letter in the second time of Messiah, since in the first they could not be. When then the second time, which we all religiously believe and expect, is arrived, there shall be, among other things, primary or principal, the elevation of Mount Zion above all the mountains and hills, a manifestly figurative expression, yet admirably proper to explain, according to the scriptures, the dignity, honour, and glory, to which the city of David shall be lifted up in which time conse-

be king over all the earth. The contrast of all this, the Lord predicted, should go on till the end of the age. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Such too are the evident facts now. By and by, when the new age dawns under Messiah's earthly reign (Rev. xi. 15), "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." It will be an order of things of which the world has had no experience, and if the casting away of Israel were the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? (Rom. xi.) The flowing of all nations unto Zion cannot mean the gathering out of them, which scripture speaks of as the church of God, even if there were not a divine judgment executed on all (and the Jews especially) before that, and if this era of peace and blessing and Messianic rule were not coincident with the supremacy of Israel, which supposes a condition wholly distinct from that of the church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all.

That which follows strongly confirms the reference to the future blessing and glory of Israel under the new covenant, and the King who shall reign in righteousness; for the prophet (chap. ii. 5), after that happy picture, invites the house of Jacob to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. Then, speaking directly to Him, he owns why He had forsaken His people, instead of setting them on high, even because they were replenished from (or, more than) the east with all that man covets and worships. (Ver. 6—8.) Their sin was unpardonable.

quently shall the nations and peoples flow toward the top of Mount Zion. What nations and peoples? Without doubt those who shall be left alive after the coming of the Lord, as it seems most clear there shall be such. . . . How is He to judge the quick if there be none? What nations, and what peoples? Without doubt those which shall remain alive after the utter ruin of the anti-Christ. . . . What nations? Without doubt those who shall remain alive after the stone falls on the statue, and, this being reduced to powder, another kingdom shall be formed on its ruins, incorruptible and everlasting, embracing all under the whole heavens." How ominous that a priest, spite of the enormous hindrances around him, should have had an insight into the prophetic word so much beyond most Protestants!

(Ver. 9.) Lastly, he calls on them to hide in the dust because of the day of Jehovah, which undoubtedly has not yet fallen on the pride and idolatry of man. (Ver. 10, 11.) The passage needs only to be read in a believing spirit in order to convince a fair mind, that neither Nebuchadnezzar nor Titus, nor the gospel, has anything to do with accomplishing the all-embracing judgment of man which is there portrayed. (Ver. 12—21.) Vain then would it be to invoke the aid of man. His day will have then ended. It is not yet eternity, but the age to come when Jehovah alone shall be exalted. The word, therefore, is “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted?” Man* as such is not able to retain his own life-breath, still less to keep others in that day. All will manifestly hang on the sovereign pleasure of Him whose glory will be no longer hidden, and whose will be then displayed in righteousness.

But universal as the prostration of human pride shall be, chapter iii. indicates that most crushingly shall the blow fall on Jerusalem and Judah, and this not only in their public political life, but minutely and searchingly on the daughters of Zion in all their haughty littleness of vain show. “For behold the Lord Jehovah of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. When a man shall take hold of his brother, of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and

* The notion that Christ is here intended, is one of these freaks of notable men which illustrates the passage they so strangely misapplied.

let this ruin be under thy hand : In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer ; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing : make me not a ruler of the people." (Ver. 1—7.) There is no surer sign of decay and of imminent dissolution, than the absence of all power among those who have the authority, when those who should be the props of the state are children, not only in fact, but in mind and purpose. Respect for what is officially exalted gives place to universal contempt, and oppression, and shameless mal-practices flaunt without check. "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen : because their tongue and their doings are against Jehovah, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The show of their countenance doth witness against them ; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul ! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." (Ver. 8, 9.)

Nevertheless, the evil day only brings out the faithful care of God over the righteous, as surely as the wicked meet with the due reward of their deeds. It is, however, a humiliating, as well as sifting time for God's people ; though the prophet declares, in the most animated terms, how Jehovah espouses the cause of the poor against those who grind down their faces. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him ; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. Jehovah standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. Jehovah will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof : for ye have eaten up the vineyard ; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor ? saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts." (Ver. 10—15.) Thus far the rulers and princes.

Quite as sorrowful is the pictures of domestic life. When women live for display in apparel, no further proof is needed to bring to their door the charge that the sanctity of the house is

violated, and that there is no real heart for the relations God has set up. Such finery is assuredly not for a husband or the family; but small as it is, it escapes not the withering notice of the Judge of all. "Moreover Jehovah saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and Jehovah will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground." (Ver. 16—26.)

So complete would be the desolation, that the dearth of men is described as exposing women to a boldness contrary to female modesty. "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." (Chap. iv. 1.) But this time of tribulation is followed by an outshining of beauty and glory, and abundant mercy for the saved and holy remnant. "In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem. When Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the

daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." (Verses 2—4.)

Vitringa's application of the spirit of judgment, and that of destruction, to the Holy Spirit guiding the rulers and ministers of the church in the discrimination, is the old source of endless error—the turning aside of Jewish scripture to an essentially Christian object. It is manifestly the day of righteous judgment on earth, and especially in its metropolis, Jerusalem. First, purity is affected, then glory shines brightly on Zion. "And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." (Ver. 5—6.) Even as the cloudy pillar once covered the tabernacle of the divine presence, so Jehovah will create on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and on her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence. To attempt to refer to the gospel these revelations of coming glory for Israel, after purging trial, is in the highest degree a distortion of scripture. During the present dispensation they are enemies for our sakes, as regards the gospel; while, as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. When that day comes, the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, and so all Israel shall be saved. It is a total change from this day of grace to judgment-day, whatever the mercy of God to the rescued out of Israel and the nations: "In that day shall there be one Jehovah and His name one." It is the deliverance, not the destruction of the still groaning creation. "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses." It is not the past nor the present; it is not the eternal state, but the millennium. It is an epoch of glory when

Jehovah will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. Divine judgment shall have washed away the guilt of Zion, and the glory shall return both more blessedly than at the first and for ever. What can contrast more with our day of suffering grace ?

CHAPTERS V., VI.

CHAPTER v. with vi. illustrates most strikingly the ways of God in the judgment of His people. They are quite distinct. Indeed chapter vi. comes in abruptly in outward form, itself distinct from what follows down to the seventh verse inclusively of chapter ix., all which portion forms a sort of peculiar parenthesis, but a parenthesis of profound interest and instruction; after which the strain of woe, begun in chapter v., is resumed in the thickening disasters of Israel and the land up to their mighty and everlasting deliverance, which yet awaits its accomplishment in the latter day.

But if chapters v. and vi. are distinct in character as in time, the Spirit of God has been pleased to set them in immediate *juxta-position* with a view to our better admonition. In fact they are the two-fold principle or standard of judgment which God is wont to apply to His people. In the one He looks back, in the other He looks forward, as it were; in the former He measures by all He has done for them what they should have been towards Him; in the latter, He judges them by His own glory manifested in their midst. The one answers to the law by which is the knowledge of sin; the other to the glory of God, from which every soul comes short. (Rom. iii. 20.)

In chapter v. the prophet sings a song to Jehovah, his well-beloved, touching His vineyard. Moses had already (Deut. xxxii.) spoken in the ears of Israel a song which celebrates in magnificent language the sovereign choice and blessing of God, the sins and punishment of the people, but withal His final mercy to His land and people, with whom the spared nations are to rejoice. Our chapter takes in a narrower field of view.

"My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and

planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." There was no failure on God's part. He had established Israel in the most favourable position, separated them to Himself, removed stumbling-blocks, crowned them with favours, vouchsafed not only protection but every means of blessing: "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Yet was all in vain. The result was only bad fruit. They, like Adam, transgressed the covenant. It was the same story over again. Human responsibility ends in total ruin. Man departs from God and corrupts His way on the earth. "And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged: but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." (Ver. 1—7.)

Thus the nation, as a whole, is weighed in the divine balances, and found wanting. So manifest and grievous is the case, that God challenges the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah (ver. 3) to judge between Him and His vineyard, though they themselves are the degenerate trees in question. There was no more doubt of the goodness shown to Israel than of their obligation to yield fruit for God. But obligation produces no fruit meet for Him. What was the consequence on such a ground as this? Nothing but woe after woe.

The truth is that, on the footing of responsibility, every creature has failed save One, who was the Creator, whatever might be His lowly condescension in appearing within the ranks of men. And what is the secret of victory for the believer now or of old? We must be above mere humanity in order to walk as saints; yea, in a sense, be above our duty in order rightly to

accomplish it. As of old, those only walked blamelessly according to the law, who looked to the Messiah in living faith: so saints now can glorify God in a holy, righteous walk, as they are under grace, not law. The sense of deliverance and perfect favour in the sight of God strengthens greatly where there is the new life.

It will be observed, accordingly, that there is nothing of Christ here as the means and channel of grace. Consequently all is unrelieved darkness and death; and the prophet presses home the evidence of overwhelming constant evil in the people of God. Not a ray of comfort or even hope breaks through, but only their sin and His judgment chime continually. Detailed sin is retributively dealt with. There is a woe to such as joined house to house and field to field, reckless of all but their own aggrandizement: Jehovah shall desolate so that their coveted vineyards and lands shall yield but a tithe of what they put in. There is a woe to the luxurious hunters of social pleasure: captivity shall drain them, and hell itself shall swallow up the mean and the mighty—multitudes without measure. And as for the bold sinners who scoffingly invited the Lord to make speed that they might see His work, as for the moral corruptors, and the wise in their own eyes, and the unjust friends of the wicked, and foes of the righteous, there is woe upon woe; “because they have cast away the law of Jehovah of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel, therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against this people, and He hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them.” But the woes are not exhausted. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” Such is the sad and recurring burden, as may be seen in chapters ix., x. The avenging nations may be far away; but, “behold they shall come with speed swiftly.” “And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.” Such is the lot of man, aye, of Israel, where Christ is not.

Chapter vi. opens a very different scene. Not that the people are one whit better; in fact it was only when Christ

appeared that man fully disclosed what he was and is. The law proved that man has and loves sin; Christ's presence proved that he hates good, hates God Himself manifested in all the purity and lowness and grace and truth of Jesus. It was not only, then, that man was himself failing and guilty; but when an object was there in every way worthy of love and homage and worship, the perfect display of man to God and of God to man, He was a light odious and intolerable to man, and man could not rest till it was extinguished as far as he could effect it. Still we are on ground sensibly and strikingly distinct; and this because the manifestation of Jehovah is in question, not the responsibility of Israel merely. Both chapters show the people judged, but the principles of judgment are wholly different.

It was not in Uzziah's palmy days that the prophet received this solemn commission, but in the year when the once prosperous, but now smitten, leprous son of David breathed his last. Then, however, Isaiah saw Jehovah sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and the mere skirts of His glory filled the temple. No vision more glorious had ever burst on human eyes: but if the attendant seraphs embraced the fulness of the earth as the scene, His holiness was their first care and chieftest cry.

The effect was immediate on the prophet. It is no longer woe unto these or those, but "woe is me." He is profoundly touched with a sense of sin and ruin—his own and the people's. But it is uttered in His presence whose grace is no less than His glory and His holiness, and the remedy is at once applied. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Nor this only: for thus set free in His presence, he becomes the ready servant of His will. "Also I heard the

voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for me? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Such is the charge, and we know how surely it was fulfilled in the judicial blindness which fell on the nation when they confessed not their uncleanness and beheld no glory nor beauty in Christ present in their midst, and refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Him risen and exalted to the right hand of God. Compare John xii. and Acts xxviii. But the Spirit of prophecy, if it pronounce the sentence of God on the people's unbelief, is notwithstanding a spirit of intercession. "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land; but yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return for burning; yet as the terebinth and the oak, of which when cut down there remains a stock; so the holy seed shall be its stock." (Verses 11—13.)

Thus, a remnant is clearly indicated here, mercy rejoicing against judgment, and God making good His own glory in both respects. But that returned remnant must be thinned under the pruning hand of Jehovah. Still the holy seed shall be there, the stock of the nation, when judgment has done its work.*

* There is no need to suppose the smallest displacement here, nor to doubt that the prophet had already exercised his office. So we see, in the apostle's case (Acts xiii.), a remarkable separation to a work among the Gentiles after he had been labouring in the gospel for some time. It is very possible that there may have been something analogous in the history of the prophet.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the last chapter we saw the glory of Christ revealed, and the assurance of a holy seed after the judgment of the land and people. We have now a weighty sequel recounting facts which occurred, not in the year King Uzziah died, nor even in the days of his successor, but in those of Ahaz. It could not otherwise have been clearly gathered how the glory of Christ was actually to appear. Our chapter solves this question, and connects His revelation with His rejection and His final and everlasting triumph. (Chap. viii., ix. 1—7.) The first part alone comes before us now.

The occasion was the offensive alliance of Rezin, King of Syria, with Pekah, Remaliah's son and King of Israel, against Judah and Ahaz. "And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim; and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." There were they in great fear, where no fear was, and this alas! in Jerusalem and David's house; and no wonder, for the heir of David's throne walked not like David his father, but in the ways of the King of Israel or worse, and made Judah naked and transgressed sore against Jehovah. Panic-stricken, yet in no way driven by his distress to God, Ahaz is met by the prophet, with his son Shear-jashub, who says from Jehovah, "Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal:" &c. (Ver. 1—6.)

How foolish, as well as base, is unbelief! It is joyous and confident when a labouring volcano is about to burst; it is filled

with anguish, when God is going to deal with the evils it dreads. In this case, how could He behold in peace a compact between apostate Israel and heathen Syria? It was not merely that their enterprise, if successful, must vex Judah, but set aside David's line. It was a blow at the Messiah, little as they might have thought of this; and the oath and honour of God were thus at stake. But "thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." (Ver. 7—9.)

How blessed are the ways of God! The effort to destroy, which seemed so awful to its objects, especially as their conscience was bad, led at once to the revelation of the doom of the destroyers. The Syrian chief would not avail to shield more guilty Ephraim; for it was sentenced—yea to be so broken as not to be a people within sixty-five years; and so it was to the letter. (2 Kings xvii.) The chief of Ephraim's capital is paraded before us like his ally in due form and title; but who were they to dispute the counsels of God as to David's royal line, let Ahaz be personally unbelieving, as he might be and was? God at least is God, and His word shall stand for ever, though surely the infidel shall not be established.

But this was only the prelude to the weightier announcement that follows: "Moreover, Jehovah spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God: ask it either in the depth or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." (Ver. 10—12.) Alas! how often the hypocrisy of disbelief thus essays to hide its contempt of Jehovah; and thorough presumption, which really despises the word of His grace, assumes the garb of superior reverence and humility. The prophet, however, sees through the cheat put forward by an evil heart of disbelief and calls now on the house of David to hear, not alone his reproof, but the sign which Jehovah Himself was to give. "Behold a [the]

virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." Marvellous grace so to promise to such a man! Yet, in truth, grace condemns unbelief and all other sin as the law never did or could. Had Ahaz asked any sign within his range of earth and heaven, how immeasurably short of God's! If man refuses to ask through unbelief, God fails not to give a sign for His own glory: the virgin's Son, the woman's Seed, Immanuel! What thoughts and feelings cluster here together! The security of David's royal line and rights, what was it more than the predicted ruin of plotting Ephraim, in the presence of the sign, the truth of truths—God with us? Yet was it the assurance, if its grandeur betokened other and higher glories, that no conspiracy could prosper which struck at the Root and Offspring of David.

It is well known that the Jews have made desperate efforts to evade this luminous testimony to the Incarnation in their own prophet. First they exaggerate the difference between *בָּתִילָה* and *בְּתוּלָה*. Confessedly the latter is the more common word for virgin; for the former occurs in not more than six passages beside the one before us. But it is certain that in Joel i. 8 "bethulah" is employed for a young married woman, which is never the case with "almah." For the argument on Prov. xxx. 19, 20 is quite invalid to prove it synonymous with an adulterous woman. In the present instance the context requires the sense of virgin with the utmost precision; for in a young married woman's bearing a son there is no wonder. It was from the first known that the Deliverer of man from the serpent enemy of the race must be born of woman in some distinctive way; it was known that He must be also son of Abraham, in the line of Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David. It is now narrowed to a virgin of that royal house. The virgin should be pregnant and bear Him; a wonder indeed! in one sense explained, in another enhanced, by the capital truth that He should be a divine person as truly as the woman's Seed, the virgin's Son, Immanuel, the Lord Jehovah, whose glory the prophet had seen in connexion with the preservation of a holy seed, spite of their repeated desolations. Thus the person of the Messiah, and

specifically the solution of the enigma of His divine character yet in association with the family of David, is fully cleared up. Hence the Septuagint very properly gives here (as in Gen. xxiv. 43), *η παρθένος*, whereas Aquila and Symmachus chose *νεᾶντς*. But it is plain that even the latter cannot get rid of the truth intended in the context; and the wild interpretations of some Jews and all Rationalists prove how hard set they are to evade its truth. In Solomon's Song (vi. 8), where the Septuagint translates the Hebrew term as *νεάντες*, the strict meaning of virgins is certain; for it is distinguished from *βασιλισσαὶ* and *παλλακαί*, and, like our word "maidens," can only be used as "virgins," as Rashi seems to allow in his comment on ch. i. 3. Nor can there well be a more glaring instance of an offensive prejudice than Gesenius' abandonment of the evident source of the word in בָּשָׁר, to "hide,"* in order to justify a more vague origin from an Arabic etymology.

Again, the most recent Jewish version known to me, that of Isaac Leeser, renders the article by the demonstrative. This is illegitimate. The object clearly is to refer the person in question to a young person then present. Nevertheless Mr. Leeser is more candid in his rendering of נְנִינָה than some of his brethren and their rationalistic followers; for he, like Rashi before him, correctly renders it "shall conceive," not "is with child." Probably the latter considered the prophet's wife† to be in question, and the child to be the same as Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Here the Rabbis are in conflict; for Kimchi held that the young woman could not be Isaiah's wife (for she must then have been designated the prophetess, as in chap. viii. 3), and, therefore, conceived her to be the wife of Ahaz, and imagined for them an unknown son named Immanuel. Aben Ezra is at issue with both, for he held it to be a third son of the prophetess, and so rather approached Rashi, but with Kimchi held the sign to be the child's eating cream and honey as soon as born.

* Even Aquila confirms this, the only true derivation of the word, and its kindred form for the other sex, by giving ἀπόκρυφος in Gen. xxiv. 43.

† Gesenius, who thought so too, tried to escape the difficulty of חַמְלָגָה.

No more words are needed to expose such views. Even Kimchi disposes of Isaiah and the prophetess by asking how then the land could be called Immanuel's land. It is plain that the Jews do not agree, save in opposing the only interpretation which carries with it a clear and noble sense yet to be the joy of repentant Israel. The notion that Hezekiah was the virgin's son is wholly untenable; for as Ahaz reigned sixteen years, and he himself was twenty-five years of age when he began to reign, he must have been a boy of at least eight years old before his father's reign began; and hence no prediction of his birth could have been made by Isaiah to Ahaz already on the throne. There is not a hint in scripture of Ahaz taking another wife after his accession and the announcement; still less is there room for a personage so wonderful, to say the least, as the Immanuel to be born, who should altogether eclipse Hezekiah and break off the yoke of the Assyrians from the neck of Israel, and bring in the glorious state promised.

It is as plain as can be on the face of these chapters that Shear-jashub (= the remnant shall return) was already born, and the prophet's companion, as we see at the beginning of chap. vii.; equally so is it that Maher-shalal-hash-baz (= Hasten prey, speed spoil, chap. viii.) was to be born of the prophetess: both distinctly setting forth the great events of such interest to Israel, the one pledging the return of the remnant, the other writing of the Assyrian attack and its consequences. Why trust the Assyrian who should spoil his own land? Why dread the kings who were so soon to be swept away? But between the two comes a wholly different promise, the virgin's Son, excluding in all fairness of exposition both the king and the prophet, whose name Immanuel (God with us), speaks incomparably better things; and who re-appears after the prophet's second son, and even after the horrors represented by his name, when devastation had done its worst. But woe to him who meddles with thy land, O Immanuel! Israel, and Judah and David's house, may too justly bring down the chastening, and the king in the land at the end be yet worse than the unworthy politician who then held the sceptre; the

ruin may seem complete, deliverance hopeless; but Immanuel and God is with them! Such is the general outline. Further details will be given in their place. We shall see that the following chapters, both in the extent and nature of Israel's distress and evil, the changed relation of God to His people, and above all the glorious interposition of Immanuel, go far beyond any present or proximate encouragement to Israel (though there was this of course), and look on to days still future and quite distinct from anything meanwhile accomplished by Christ for the Christian.

Nothing can be more apposite than "the sign" Jehovah gave, little as the feeble and self-willed Ahab might appreciate it. For the coalition of the king of Israel with him of Syria was to depose the house of David and set up Ben Tabeal over Judah. Man would have counted it enough to promise that his son Hezekiah, and his son, and so on, should succeed; and this would have been much to comfort one who simply confided in a promise through a divinely sent prophet. But as for all promises of God, in Christ is the Yea; through Him is the Amen for glory unto God. Hence for the Jew all is made to centre in the Messiah. Not merely shall a remnant return, but the Seed of promise, the virgin's son, be born. Put this birth as far off as you please from the time of Ahaz, only thereby do you render conspicuous the sure mercies of David. The righteous covenant of God would not fail to judge what an Ahaz and a Manasseh, a Jehoiakim and a Jehoiachin would sow, spite of a faithful Hezekiah or a godly Josiah. But Immanuel was an indefectible assurance that no confederacy could put down David's house finally. Messiah, Son of David, is the divine guarantee. The virgin must necessarily be of that stock; the Son must necessarily be, in some true though mysterious way, God Himself. This done, all is sure and clear.

It is scarcely necessary, perhaps, and yet for some readers it may be a help, to observe that the "son" Immanuel, in verse 14, is not "the child" of verse 16, which last refers rather to Shear-jashub, who for this reason seems to have accompanied the prophet.

"For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." It will be noticed, accordingly, that here we have Isaiah turning from "the house of David," "ye" and "you," to "thou," &c., that is, Ahaz. Compare verses 13, 14 with 16, 17. And it is certain that the prophet's child Shear-jashub had the character of a "sign" (see chap viii. 18), though and of course very distinct from the great sign, the virgin's son. From verse 16 the king was to learn, that before the child, then present, arrived at years of discretion, the allied kings must disappear from the scene. And so they did: for three years more scarce passed over its youthful head before the kings of Israel and Syria fell before the treachery or might of their enemies.

The difficulty urged as to "the land" which should be forsaken, whose two kings were an object of dread to Ahaz, is imaginary. **ארץ** is not at all restricted to the sense of a single country. It is a word susceptible of considerable variety of meaning, as the context may require, from earth or ground, in the narrowest sense, to an entire country or several countries, or even the superficial world at large, the habitable earth. Thus "all the families of the earth" extend its force comprehensively, and here the two kings define it as the land, not of one only but of them both. Compare as to this chap. viii. 4, "For before the child [Maher-shalal-hash-baz] shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." See also 2 Kings xv. 29, 30; xvi. 9. The "two kings" would seem to be, therefore, those of Syria and Samaria or Israel, and "the land" that pertaining to each. The Messianic interpretation of ver. 14 rests on an irrefragable basis; but it is, as I think, weakened, rather than confirmed, by the application of the two kings to those of Israel and Judah, and the child of ver. 16 to the virgin's son of ver. 14.

The efforts of Jews and rationalists to shake this grand prophecy of the Messiah are not violent merely but pitiable. Thus some of them turn it thus: He, whose name is Wonderful

Counsellor, Mighty God,* Father of Eternity, shall call him (Hezekiah) Prince of peace. Even here the witnesses do not agree: for the Talmud, who applies it in the same way, boldly gives *all eight* titles to the son of Ahaz. But the construction is also, as Dr. McCaul pointed out, contrary to Hebrew idiom, which requires that *וְ*, referring to the person named, should be placed between the names and the person or thing named (see Gen. xvi. 15, xxi. 3, xxii. 14; Exod. ii. 22; Ruth iv. 17; 1 Sam. i. 20; 2 Sam. xii. 25). The Talmudical application of all to Hezekiah is too exaggerated if not impious for some modern Jews who follow Rashi. But even their attribute of Prince of peace to that pious king is in the face of all the scriptural account of his troubled reign. Others, like Mr. Leeser, translate it "Counsellor of the mighty God, of the everlasting Father, prince of peace," and think it important to note that it alludes to a child already born, contrary to his own version of chap. vii. 14, and forgetful of the habit of the prophets to speak of things that are not as though they were, realising them in prophetic vision, but giving enough in the context to prove that they are future.

But the Targum supports the proper Messianic reference, and proves that among the ancient Jews no doubt was entertained that the prophet spoke only of the Messiah. The desolation of the land of old by the Assyrian will be renewed by the last representative of the great northern and eastern power, to which the prophets really look onward. How vain then for Ahaz to seek confederacy with the Assyrian of his day! Confederacies there were of old, confederacies pre-eminently in the last days; but the people of God must not trust and need not fear them. Let Jehovah be his refuge and his sanctuary: the godly remnant, His disciples, will need it for the awful and unexampled troubles of the end of this age. Yet the light of Galilee would be for them. The rejected Immanuel, because of whom Jehovah

* Gesenius would like to translate this title "the Mighty Hero," in order to get rid of "God" here. But *וְ* is never used as an adjective; and even so, if it were Hero only, should follow, not precede *וְ*, as has been noticed.

had so long hidden His face from the house of Jacob (what a comment on Jewish history since Titus took Jerusalem, yea since the cross !), will cause light to spring up among the despised but godly ones of the people, as at Christ's first coming ; and then, when the climax of trial is reached, and the righteous seen hopelessly broken by the pride and blasphemy of the apostate mass of the Jews in confederacy with the apostate head of the western powers to hold off the Assyrian, Jehovah of Israel will display Himself their deliverer, but no other than their own crucified Messiah now to reign over them in power and glory and peace for ever.

The reader will find abundant confirmation of all this in the context, by a careful study of chaps. x., xi., where he will find the Assyrian once more, and his destruction followed by the reign of the victorious Messiah. Many who love the Lord are, grievous to say, to be censured for a too eager conversion of these scriptures to their own relationship with the Lord ; whereas the Old Testament gives us but the common divine principle for all saints : in the New the Hebrews should look for, as there only can we find, specific direction and instruction in what is properly Christian. Their evident bias, and the plain perversion which results, do incalculable mischief to the Jews, as well as afford ready occasion of attack to unbelief where mind is exercised on scripture. In such interpretations they can easily prove the popular views of Christendom erroneous, and hence harden themselves in their own deadly error against the truth which the most ignorant Christian knows he has from God.

Should guilty Ahaz and Judah, then, go unpunished ? In no wise, as the prophet proceeds to let him know. "Jehovah shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes." (Ver. 17—19.) The

faith of Hezekiah might stay the execution of Judah's judgment, and the king of Assyria was rebuked for a season. But even Josiah, faithful as he was, suffered for his rash opposition to "the fly that is in the uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt." and "the bee that is in the land of Assyria" stung yet more fiercely at the summons of Jehovah. "In the same day shall Jehovah shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep. And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither, because all the land shall become briers and thorns. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle." (Ver. 20—25.) The character of Israel's land should thus be wholly changed; and so complete the desolation ensuing that the owner of a young cow and two sheep would find the amplest range for his scanty flock in the wilderness that succeeded to the rich cornfields of Palestine, and himself be fed on the nourishment proper to wandering hordes, not on the food of cultivated lands. What a picture! Yes, and the best of vineyards (compare Song of Sol. viii.) becomes a bed of briers and thorns; and men cannot pass unprotected by bows and arrows; and the carefully tended hills are turned into a place for oxen and lesser cattle. So dark as well as minute are the lines in which the sorrowful change in Judea is set before her king.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE have already the two great parties of which the prophecy treats, Immanuel and the Assyrian. The virgin should conceive a Son—Messiah, Immanuel: Jehovah should bring upon the faithless son of David the ravaging king of Assyria; though with mercy assured to a remnant.

In the chapter before us now we have fuller and other information vouchsafed of Jehovah. A great roll has to be taken and written concerning another son of the prophet, then unborn, with the mystic name of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. This is explained to and by Isaiah: “For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.” (Ver. 4). And this, the inspired history proves, was fulfilled to the letter.

But there is more. “Jehovah spake also unto me again saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son. Now therefore, behold, Jehovah bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; and he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.” We are here in the presence of the scenes of the latter day, whatever type may be supposed to have already been. The Assyrian proudly fills the land, Immanuel’s land, reaching even “to the neck;” yet he is not merely checked and put to shame, but utterly and for ever broken.

The people here had no faith, any more than the king in the preceding scene. Both of them despised the ways and the promises of God. Their confidence, as their fear, was man. If Ahaz cowered before the two tails of the smoking firebrands, as

Jehovah contemptuously designated the fierce anger of the combined kings of Israel and Syria, the people refused the softly-flowing streams of Siloah. Just would be their retribution. The impetuous river, the Assyrian, should rise to overflowing and well-nigh overwhelm the land.

But is it not "thy land, O Immanuel?" Assuredly it is, and whatever be the king, whatever the people, whatever the humbling of them both, will not God avenge the insult to Him who, when reviled, reviled not again? He is not deaf to the cry of His elect. How does He not feel for Immanuel! Did the people associate themselves? They might spare themselves the trouble: they shall be broken. Did all they of far countries gird themselves? Let them hear, if they fear not—let them hear their sentence of Jehovah. "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us." (Ver. 9—10.)

This opens the door for pointing out the path of faith for the godly, Jehovah Himself the sole and sure resource, the one object of reverence and fear in a day of manifold evil and thickening danger. "For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify Jehovah of hosts himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." (Ver. 11—18.)

In truth, to be thus in felt, confessed weakness and cast thereby on "Jehovah of hosts Himself," is really, spite of all appearance to the eyes and reasonings of men, to be master of the situation. Even in a still more blessed way the apostle could take pleasure in infirmities, in reproach, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake. "Thus gladly (as he had said before) will I rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

This brings about the final, triumphant deliverance of Israel, though connected with present facts and looking onward through the dreary circumstances of the desolate remnant, till the Lord rises up and settles all in the destruction of every foe. The united strength of their enemies should be vain. What those who feared Jehovah needed was neither a confederacy nor alarm at such as trusted in it, but to sanctify Jehovah, and make Him their sanctuary, though He should be a stone of stumbling, even to both the houses of Israel, yea a gin and snare to Jerusalem itself.

It is clear, then, that here we have not only the nations who would have swallowed up Israel doomed to a total overthrow, but Israel, too, in all its extent, stumbling at the stone of stumbling—their own Jehovah-Messiah. And withal, in the midst is seen a feeble few cleaving to His testimony, and owned as His disciples, while Jehovah hid His face from the people as a whole. They are a separate remnant, when the mass stumble, fall, and are broken, snared and taken. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to cite ver. 18 with other scriptures (Psalms xvi. and xxii.), to prove sanctified ones with Him, not only the dependent man but the Sanctifier, however He may not be ashamed to call them brethren; and this, now in Christianity, as by and bye in the latter day, while the nation are given over to blindness and unbelief.

The closing verses (19—22) show their exceeding iniquity and their impious recourse to the powers of darkness, in their own evident want of light, as they despised and departed from the law and the testimony of Jehovah. The effect is intense misery, audacious rage and blasphemy of their King and their God, and the agony of despair.

CHAPTER IX.

"NEVERTHELESS the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Verses 1, 2.) The citation of this in Matthew iv. gives much light; there the fulfilment may extend to a future day, and in a form more complete in some respects, as far as the people are concerned. Let the hand of oppression be yet more grievous than had ever pressed upon them; yet would there be this difference (and how verified during our Lord's first appearing in their midst!), that among the darkest and most despised in the land should spring up a great light. It was in Galilee, not Jerusalem, that the grace of Jesus shone. And so in the last days: the Galilean character attaches to the future remnant. Jerusalem will be the prey of the worst delusions and deadliest error. But the darkest and coldest night precedes a dawn of joy and glory. And so it will be for Israel, when He who was despised and their stumbling-block, but withal Jehovah the shield and sanctuary of the weak godly remnant, shall rise and shine in all His effulgence on His people.

"Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not* increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a

* Margin, "to him," or it.

child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this." It is plain that "*not increased the joy*" is erroneous. The margin is right, substantially, as the next clause might prove to any reader.

The hour of freedom and victory is come ; and Jehovah it is who has done all. But it is not as in ordinary war, with noise of human conflict and bloodshed : burning and fuel of fire distinguish this from other battles. And no wonder, when He stands out their Kinsman-Redeemer, the true, but once rejected, Son of David, who is their boast now, with every name of power, and peace and blessing, with an endless reign before Him, established with righteousness and judgment from henceforth and for ever. Truly "the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this."

The prophet now resumes the dirge of judgment on the nation in general, begun in chapter v., and interrupted by the two-fold episode of chapter vi. and of chapters vii., viii., ix. 1—7. This last gave us the special development of Jehovah's ways with His people ; the revelation of His glory in Christ, with its effects in judgment and mercy ; the Incarnation, or Immanuel, the virgin's Son, the stay of David's house and hope of Israel, spite of the land desolated by the Assyrian ; then the re-appearance of the Assyrian, now that it is Immanuel's land, and the overthrow of all the Gentiles associated with him, whatever his temporary but great successes even in the pleasant land ; next, an inner moral view of the people when (strange to say) Jehovah should be for a stone of stumbling to both the houses of Israel but a sure sanctuary for a godly remnant, "My disciples," who would be for signs and wonders in Israel at the very time Jehovah hides His face, as He is clearly doing now, from the house of Jacob : all closing in darkness and trouble such as never was for the mass, and yet with light for the despised

Galileans, as at the Lord's first advent, so just before the nation is multiplied, the oppression is broken, the victory one not by human sword but by burning and fuel of fire; and He who is not more surely the virgin's Son, the woman's Seed, than the mighty God, the Prince of peace, establishes His blessed kingdom from henceforth even for ever.

Here we take up again (compare chap. v. 25) the general train, but with allusion to some of the instruction, as for instance to Rezin and the Assyrian, in the parenthetical part. Verses 8—12 contain the renewed announcement of divine displeasure. "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. Therefore Jehovah shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth." It is clear that as yet the ten rebellious tribes are the object of judgment, and emphatically their pride of heart in despising the Lord's rebuke and confiding in their own powers. For this is their fond hope and vain-glorious arrogance, turning their breach into an occasion of greater strength and display than ever. "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." But here came the retributive dealing of God. Had Syria's king, Rezin, joined them in unholy league against Judah? "Therefore Jehovah shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth." So it ever is. The unfaithful people seek the world's alliance against those with whom God's testimony is, but prove ere long that the friendship of the world is not only enmity against God but destruction to themselves. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

The next view of their judgment (ver. 13—17) is not so

much judicial retribution from without, but, because His chastening was slighted, Jehovah's giving up Israel to utter internal demoralization. "For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek Jehovah of hosts. Therefore Jehovah will cut from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head ; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err ; and they that are led of them are destroyed." The ruin is universal in one day on all classes, from the highest to the lowest of Israel, "branch and rush :" all plunged into common destruction, leaders and led. What a picture ! and how much more dismal and hopeless, when the righteous Jehovah, indignant at the abounding falsehood and wrong under the highest pretensions to sanctity, "shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on the fatherless and widows." Neither youth and vigour are pleasant to Him, nor can orphanage or widowhood touch His heart longer in a people so depraved : "For every one is an hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Then follows a most vivid picture (ver. 18, 19) of wickedness burning like fire; of Jehovah's wrath darkening the land; and of the reckless unsparing violence of brother against brother. "And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry ; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied : they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm : Manasseh, Ephraim : and Ephraim, Manasseh ; and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The nearest of the ten should devour each other, and both Judah. Nevertheless, it is the earthly judgment of God. We must look elsewhere to find the still more awful eternal judgment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving in the resurrection of judgment. For the full revelation of this, however, we must turn to the New Testament.

CHAPTER X.

THE last of these disciplinary inflictions is given in chapter x. Here (ver. 1—4) it is the unrighteousness of the judges, who stood in the place of God himself, and were called Elohim, gods (Psalm lxxxii.), but most grievously misrepresented His character and wronged His people, specially the defenceless. “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?” And this is His sentence on them: “Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain.” The most exalted shall be most abased; and those shall fare worst whom it least became to turn their high estate and large power to God-dishonouring greed and oppression of the weak and wretched. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

But now, from verse 5, we enter on a most weighty change. The Assyrian desolator comes up once more. It is his final working which is chiefly in the mind of the Holy Ghost; as indeed this is the grand catastrophe and last trouble of Jacob, and in contrast with the previous solemn formula of still continuing, unexhausted wrath. Now, on the contrary, we have in this proud enemy of Israel the rod of Jehovah’s anger. “The day of visitation” is there, the “desolation from far” is come. The indignation ceases and Jehovah’s anger in their destruction. His anger now is turned away and His arm stretched out no more. The rod should be broken, the scourge destroyed.

Again, it is of great moment to apprehend clearly that the Antichrist, or man of sin, is a totally distinct personage. The

commentators, from Eusebius to Horsley, who confound the two, are inexcusably careless of the scriptures; for it is very clear that there will be a wilful king in the city and land who will set himself up as Messiah and Jehovah in His temple, received as such by the apostate Jews; and that, altogether opposed to the Antichrist in Jerusalem who is in league with the western power, there is another chief, an external antagonist of the Jews, who is the Assyrian, or king of the north, so often occurring in the prophecies. Of him Sennacherib was a type.

The Assyrian then was first used as a rod to chastise Israel. "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." But he owned not God, saying, "Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Harran as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?" His own doom is therefore sealed. "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down their inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts send among his fat ones leanness; and under his

glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainted. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them." It is the closing scene. The Lord has not even yet performed His whole work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem. Nay, He will not have done as long as the Antichrist will be there. Having disposed of him by His epiphany from heaven, the Assyrian still remains to be punished. The former is the enemy of the heavenly rights and glory of Christ, and will be destroyed by His sudden shining forth from heaven; the latter is more opposed to His earthly rights, and will be dealt with accordingly when He is come to reign over the earth. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon Jehovah the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.* the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord Jehovah of hosts shall make a consumption even determined, in the midst of all the land." Then indeed Israel's unbelief shall for ever pass away: Israel shall trust no more in an arm of flesh, be it Egyptian, Assyrian, or what not. The slaughter of Midian and the manner of Egypt give the characteristic patterns of the future deliverance.† (Ver. 26.)

* The Apostle uses these words in Rom. xi. to justify from the Old Testament the fact which is assumed throughout the New Testament that only a remnant of the people had saving relations with God. So it is now under the gospel, as it was after Babylon; and so it will be when the last crisis comes, and the struggles of the Antichrist and the Assyrian till the Messiah decides all and displays His kingdom in power here below. Compare Dan. viii. 19—25; ix. 26, 27; xi. 36—45; xii. 11.

† Dr. R. P. Smith, the present Dean of Canterbury, says well (in his "Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah") : "Thus the Prophet

The chapter closes with a most animated description of the Assyrian's march down from the north into the utmost nearness to Jerusalem. "He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron ; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages : they are gone over the passage : they have taken up their lodging at Geba ; Ramah is afraid ; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim : cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed ; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day : he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem." In vain, however : he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. "Behold the Lord, JEHOVAH of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror ; and the high ones of statures shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one." The image here employed most appropriately prepares the way for the introduction in the next and connected chapter of Messiah, the slender twig from the stump of Jesse, and the fruitful sprout to grow from his roots.

at once marks the difference between the two kingdoms. The one has a definite place in the Divine economy ; the other is used but for a temporary object. For the moment, therefore, it may triumph ; but it has no mission of its own, no settled final purpose in the world, and therefore no special providence hems it around. But Jerusalem, however unworthy, was the actual centre of the world's history ; and in spite of her feebleness, in spite of her comparative insignificance, she must outlive the far mightier kingdoms of Nineveh and Babylon, of Persia and Macedon and Antioch ; for on her existence depended the accomplishment of God's unchanging counsels." It would have added immensely to the convictions of the author and to the value of his book, had he seen that the purposes of God as to the earth, which roll round Israel as their centre, are only suspended for a season because of their rejection of Messiah and the gospel, to be renewed by grace at the end of this age in order to bring in the new age, when God has completed His present gathering out from the nations for heavenly glory with Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

IN contrast with the destruction of the high and haughty Assyrian under the stroke of Jehovah, we have in the eleventh chapter a remarkable and full description of the Messiah; first, in a moral point of view; and, next, in His kingdom, its character and accompaniments.

The entire strain is closed with a suited song of praise (chap. xii.) in the lips of Israel, now indeed and for ever blessed of Jehovah, their Holy One in their midst.

To look and contend for a fulfilment of this prophecy in Hezekiah or Josiah would be idle, and only shows the straits to which the rationalistic enemies of revelation are reduced. No king, let him be ever so pious or glorious, that followed Ahaz, no, nor David nor Solomon in the past, even approached the terms of the prediction either personally or in the circumstances of their reign. Did the "Spirit of Jehovah" rest upon the better of the two when he said, "I shall now perish by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines?" Was it "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding," when he feigned himself mad, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard? Was it "the Spirit of counsel and might," when David amused his credulous host of Gath with his fictitious razzias against the south of Judah, when in truth he was invading the Geshurites, Amalekites, &c., without leaving a human being to tell the tale? Was it the "Spirit of knowledge" that dealt with Absalom? Was the numbering of Israel done in "the fear of Jehovah?" Was the matter of Uriah a proof that "righteousness" was "the girdle of his loins," or "faithfulness" "of his reins?" When was the earth smitten with the rod of any king's mouth, or whose lips had breathed to the destruction of the wicked? And who has seen that wondrous change, depicted in verses 6—9, passing over the fierce beasts and the most timid,

and man's lordship owned at length by all, subject and harmonious, even in the person of a babe? Equally impossible, at the least, is it to say, that the latter part of the chapter was met by anything resembling its predictions in any era of Israel. The idea of Zerubbabel fulfilling it is preposterous.

Is it contended, on the other hand, that this glowing picture of the great King and His kingdom is realized spiritually in the church and in the blessings of the gospel? Without descending so low as the gross pretensions of papal ambition, the spiritual or rather mystical interpretation which suits worldly-minded Christendom finds its expression in Theodoret or earlier still. This writer sees the apostolic doctrine change earth into heaven, and the picture in verses 6—8 accomplished in kings, prefects, generals, soldiers, artisans, servants, and beggars partaking together of the same holy talk and hearing the same discourses! Paul with the philosophers at Athens illustrates, according to him, the weaned child putting his hand on the cockatrice's den; as the promise to Peter (Matt. xvi. 18) answers to the predicted absence of any destructive thing! The Lord's holy mountain he explains as the loftiness, strength, and immutability of His divine teaching. Theodoret justly explodes the folly of applying such a prophecy to Zerubbabel, who was only governor of a few Jews, and in no way whatever of Gentiles; but he offers an alternative, hardly preferable, in the Acts of the Apostles, specially in St. Paul's Epistles.

This kind of interpretation is not only false in fact but injurious and corrupting in principle. It confounds the church with Israel; it lowers the character of our blessing in Christ from heaven to earth; it weakens the word of God by introducing a haziness needful to the existence of such applications; it undermines the mercy and the faithfulness of God, because it supposes that the richest and most unconditional of His promises to Israel are notwithstanding taken from them and turned into a wholly different channel. If God could so speak and act towards Israel, where is the guarantee for the Christian or the church? The apostle can and does quote from the prophets, and this very chapter of our prophet, to vindicate the blessing

of the Gentiles and their glorifying God for His mercy ; but the self-same apostle maintains that there is now the revelation of a mystery which was hid from ages and generations, the mystery of Christ and the church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

In this prophecy however, as in the Old Testament generally, we see the distinctive blessing of Israel, though there is hope for the Gentiles, as well as judgment on the enemies. All this supposes a state of things essentially differing from God's ways with His church, during which Israel ceases to be the depositary of His testimony and promise. For as the natural Jewish branches were broken off from the olive-tree and the Gentile wild olive was grafted in, so because of non-continuance in God's goodness the Gentile will be broken off and the natural branches grafted in again ; "And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Meanwhile blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Then they will hail their rejected Messiah, and the universal blessing of the earth will follow His destruction of their foes as the initiatory act of His kingdom. Of this (not of the gospel, as regards which the Jews are enemies on our account) our chapters speak ; and, thus viewed, all flows harmoniously onward both as a whole and in the smallest detail.

I cannot but think with others that the allusion to the stem of *Jesse* is significant. Elsewhere Messiah is viewed as David's son, or styled David himself ; here He is a scion from the trunk of Jesse and a branch or shoot from his roots, for the purpose, it would seem, of drawing attention to the lowly condition into which the royal race should have sunk at the birth of the Christ. It was from that family, when of no account in Israel, that David was anointed for the throne. The prophet designates the rise of a greater than David, not from the glory that had been conferred on the house, but in a way readily suggestive of obscurity. From this stock, lowly of old, lowly once more, sprang the hope

of Israel on whom the Spirit rested without measure; or, as Peter preached, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.

Here however it is not in the activity of grace among the sorrows of men and the oppressions of the devil, that we see Jesus, but in view of His government. Thoroughly subject to Jehovah, He rules not according to appearance but righteously in His fear. Such is the effect of the power that rested on Him. It "shall make him of quick understanding [or scent], in the fear of Jehovah; he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." The Holy Spirit portrays the Messiah's moral fitness for His earthly reign. I say, His earthly reign, for so it evidently is throughout for every reader who is free from prejudice or prepossession. And this is confirmed by the latter part of verse 4: "and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." We need no human comment here, because we have already divine light in 2 Thess. ii. 8. The inspired apostle applies it to the Lord's future destruction of the lawless one, the man of sin, the issue of the apostasy of Christendom, the same personage, doubtless, that the beloved disciple describes in 1 John ii. 22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." This latter testimony helps to link all together. 2 Thess. ii. views him specially as the result yet to be manifested of that mystery of lawlessness which was even then working unseen. Isaiah shows not only the great outside enemy, the Assyrian, judged in chapter x., but, in chapter xi. 4, the internal enemy, "that wicked," whom the apostates will accept as their Messiah, destroyed by the true Messiah appearing in glory. He is "the lawless" one, such is the form of his iniquity. 1 John ii. describes him, first, as the denier of the Messianic glory of Jesus; and next, in his full character of Antichrist (as well as liar) in denying the Father and the Son, that is, the glory of Christ as revealed in Christianity.

Being thus shown the setting aside of the Antichrist at the end of this age, we have next a display of the reign of the true Christ and its beneficent effects. "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." It is the world or habitable earth to come whereof we speak (Heb. ii.)—not heaven but earth, and especially the land of Israel under Him whose right it is. What ground is there to doubt its plain and literal accomplishment? I have never heard of any serious objection, save for Sadducean minds which know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should, in honour of the reign of Jesus, change not the face only but the habits and bent of all animated nature, delivering the creature from the bondage of corruption under which it now groans? The Psalms celebrate the great day with songs of joy; the prophets are not silent about it; the apostle Paul repeatedly treats it as a settled Christian expectation, only awaiting the revelation of Christ and the sons of God along with Him. There is a grievous gap in every scheme and every heart which does not look for the world's jubilee: without it the earth would only seem made to be spoiled of Satan; whereas to one taught as to this of God, if there were a single creature not put manifestly under the feet of the exalted Son of man, the enemy would be allowed so far to defraud Him of His just reward and supreme rights. In that day we shall see (for now we see not yet) all things put under Him: divine judgment on the quick, executed by Christ, brings it in, as we have gathered from verse 4 compared with 2 Thess. ii.

It is either forgotten or explained away, that God has

purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times (that is, in the millennial age, or the day of His manifested kingdom) to gather together in one all things in Christ, both those in heaven and those on earth (Ephes. i. 9, 10); for the reconciliation will embrace not only those who believe, but all things whether in earth or in heaven (Col. i. 20, 21). Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21). It is strange doctrine to deny truth so clearly revealed; it is strange logic to adduce passages from the Greek and Latin classics, from the so-called Sibylline Oracles, Ferdousi, Ibn Onein, and the Zendavesta, as rendering improbable the direct interpretation. For it is certain that traditions lingered among the heathen of a golden age of creation to return another day. The complimentary application of this by a courtly poet is in no way inconsistent with the hope of a full fruition. If it were so, what matters heathen thought, since scripture is clear in holding out such glorious expectations for the earth under the Messiah?

But this is not all: Israel must be received back in order that the world may thus know life from the dead. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people(s);* to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." Those do the enemy's work who contend that these scriptures are fulfilled, or even in course of fulfilment. Save the general principle (which is, no doubt, conspicuous in the gospel)—that Gentiles seek and hope for and find eternal blessedness in Christ, it is a scene wholly future. The person of the Messiah has been revealed: and we

* I do not think that the reference is to the tribes of the ancient people of God, but to such of the nations as shall be in relationship with Jehovah, as distinguished from other Gentiles who are not.

know how truly He was the vessel of the Spirit on earth, and that there was displayed every grace which became man towards God, or God towards man, in Christ Jesus Himself, withal God over all, blessed for evermore. But He is not yet seated on His own throne nor exercising His public kingdom here below; nor are the remnant of His people yet recovered from north, south, east, and west. Are we therefore to suppose that His arm is shortened? or that He has abandoned His cherished purpose, and that His gifts and calling are subject to repentance? Such is not our God. Is He ours only and not also of the Jews? Yes, theirs also; "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." It is a pitifully poor fulfilment of this exceeding great and precious promise to suppose all fulfilled in the feeble return from Babylon, when a small part of the Jews went up to Jerusalem with a very few individuals of Ephraim; and their neighbours sunk lower and lower under the various imperial powers till Rome ground all down to servitude. No, it is a bright day of great things, not for man only, but for the name of Jehovah on earth. It is not the heavenly mystery of Christ and the church, but the times of restitution of all things according to prophecy. The moral history of Israel shall be reversed, as decidedly as natural history must be taught anew for the lower creation. Their old jealousies and mutual enmities, too well known after Solomon, fade away for restored Israel. And as for their plotting neighbours,* they may re-appear, but it is to

* The remarks of Houbigant may be helpful to some on this head. He is objecting to the popular error of allegorizing without limit: "Sed enim occursum est difficultati, quæ ex eis quæ mox diximus, nasci potest. Nam quæritur, quomodo in ultimo reditu Judæorum accidere possit ut Judæi *excurrant in terminos Philisteorum, Moabitarum, Ammonitarum*, cum regna illa jam dudum perierint. Respondeo eadem regna jam periisse tum, cum Apostoli gentes Evangelio subdiderunt; itaque explicandum esse illis etiam, qui hoc Isaie caput XI. de conversione gentium per Apostolos facta intelligent, quomodo Apostoli subdidierint gentes, quæ eorum ætate jam interierant. Nos responsum eorum nostram

be put down for ever. "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them." From the Assyrian, the towering king of the north, Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon contrived to escape (Dan. xi.); but not so from the hands of Israel "out of weakness made strong." Jehovah shall be seen over the sons of Zion, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord Jehovah shall blow the trumpet and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

Then, in verses 15, 16, we have Jehovah's supernatural dealing with external nature on behalf of His people, when He utterly destroys the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and smites the river into seven streams, so that men may pass dryshod, and there is an highway for the remnant from Assyria, as of old from Egypt. In all this latter portion the mystical reading is at utter fault; and greater wonders than in the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts await the final deliverance of Israel from Egypt and from Assyria in the face of a gainsaying and incredulous age.

faciemus; quæ quidem sic videtur fieri posse, ut credatur Isaia appellare Judæorum vicinas gentes nominibus iis, quæ tum cognita erant, et notari eas gentes, quæ illarum veterum regiones occupaturæ olim sunt, forsitan etiam idem nomen habituræ: quæ responsio valere etiam potest in nominibus propriis, *Assur, Ālam, Sennaar, &c.* Judicabit sapiens Lector an hoc sit in explicandis Prophetis *aperte judaizare*, non discedere a proprietate verborum, nisi adest magna necessitas. Nos quidem eam necessitatem tantam esse credimus, quanta maxima esse potest, si Prophetarum verba explicare allegorice nequeas, nisi intervertas Prophetæ sententiam, ut mox Grotium fecisse vidimus; vel, nisi, ut nunc Forerium videmus, mutes personas de quibus prædictitur, et pugnes, vel tecum, vel cum ipsa vaticinatione, quam suscepereis explicandam."—*Prolegomena ad Prophetas*, p. cclviii.

CHAPTER XII.

THE song for “that day” concludes this section of our prophet, and is divided into two parts: the first of which (ver. 1—3) is Israel’s praise for what God has been and is to itself; the second (ver. 4—6) is the spread of His praise in all the earth, though Zion be still the centre where God dwells. “And in that day thou shalt say, I will praise thee, O Jehovah. Though thou hast been angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me, Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for Jah Jehovah is my glory and song; he is become my salvation. And ye shall draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation.* And in that day ye shall say, Praise Jehovah; celebrate his name; declare his doings among the peoples; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing unto Jehovah, for he hath done a splendid deed: it is declared in all the earth, Cry out and shout, O inhabitants of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel.” Certainly it is not a temporal deliverance only, however astonishing and complete, but there are blessings for the soul also. This however does not take it from Israel nor compel us to interpret it of the Gentiles, however surely we now profit during the gospel by the same grace of God. But it is plain that as a whole the language strictly belongs to a body once forsaken and the object of displeasure, which is not true of the church, but is precisely applicable to the ancient people in the day when Messiah shall be manifested to them, and they shall say with heart and mouth, Blessed is He that comes in the name of Jehovah.

* This verse 3 is no interruption of the song, but a connected and beautifully harmonious part of it.

CHAPTERS XIII., XIV.

WE begin now a very distinct section of our prophet, which is not occupied so much as before with Israel, though of course we find Israel therein; but still they are not the immediate object of the prophecy, but rather the nations and their judgment, running down from circumstances that were then immediately imminent to the very "end of the age."

As to the expression just used, which occurs so often in the Gospel of Matthew, its application is to that condition of things during which Israel are found under the law and without their Messiah. The new age, on the contrary, will be characterized by their being under the new covenant. Their Messiah will then reign over them in glory. Their Old Testament gives us, not only these ages, but the times before them, as the New Testament unveils the eternity that is to follow them. Practically, the New like the Old speaks of these two ages as connected with Israel: the age that was going on when Christ came and was rejected, and that which is to come when He returns in glory. "*In this age*" there is a mixture of good and evil, to be closed by an awful conflict in which the beast and the false prophet will fall. The age to come will see Satan bound and the Lord Jesus governing the earth in displayed power and glory.

Thus the difference of the ages is of incalculable importance. If you do not distinguish the present from the age to come, all must be confused, not for thought only, but for practice also. For now it is a question of grace and faith, evil being allowed outwardly to triumph, as we see in the cross. In the world to come the evil will be externally judged and kept down, and the good will be exalted over all the earth, and fill the whole world with the knowledge of Jehovah and His glory. The end of the age therefore is evidently future; and so scripture speaks. Thus for us it is "*this present evil age*," from which

Christ's death has delivered us ; the new age will be good, not evil, as surely as it is a future thing. Again, if we think not of the church, but of Israel, I suppose that the age began with their being under the law in the absence of the Messiah. The new age will be when Israel have their Messiah not only come, but come again and reigning ; for the presence of the Messiah in humiliation did not interrupt the age ; and still less did their rejection of Him bring in the new age. Only there is now another mighty work of God in process, based on the heavenly glory of Christ and the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, and marked here below by the church of God. During this mercy is flowing out to the Gentiles ; so that we may call it the Gentile parenthesis of mercy. Before, and quite distinct from this, were the times of the Gentiles, when God in His providence gave Gentiles to take the government of the world, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head of the great image ; this one we may call the Gentile parenthesis of judgment. They are both of them within the limits of "this age," and are going on still. The new age will be brought in by the Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven.

Now this at once introduces a very important change, namely, that repentant Israel will be delivered, and the nations come up for the judgment of the quick when the Son of man shall have entered on His kingdom. (Comp. Matt. xxv. ; Rev. xi.—xx.) The first part of Isaiah we saw to be the judgment of Israel and then their final blessing. This is always a principle of the dealings of God : when He judges, He begins at His own house. Hence Peter says, "The time is come that judgment must begin with the house of God," and then he shows that if "the righteous scarcely (or with difficulty) are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?" But God has undertaken to save the righteous, although it be with difficulty and in face of an amazing mass of contradiction and trial, and of their own utter weakness. All these things make it hard indeed ; but what is insuperable to us is an opening for the glory of God ; and He *has* got over the great difficulty, and that was our sins. Is sin—any, all, sin—any longer a difficulty for Christ ? Has He

not for the believer put sins away by the cross? But if there is no difficulty to God, there are many to us; and the word, "the righteous *scarcely* are saved," is in relation to our dangers by the way. Now if that be so, what will be the end of the ungodly? The apostle Peter applies it to the Christian, and looks at the world as coming under judgment when the Lord shall appear. In the Old Testament, it is not the church but Israel that are in question; but God invariably begins with that which is nearest to Him. Accordingly all the first twelve chapters have been occupied with Israel as the foreground of the picture, whatever incidental notice there may be of others.

But from this portion onward, through a dozen chapters more, we have the Gentiles prominent, though Jerusalem too is judged in their midst, ending with the dissolution of the earth and with the higher ones punished on high. He had shown us the judgment of His own house; now He deals with the nations in relationship with His people, one after another.

First of all Babylon comes up, because it was the great Gentile power then allowed to take possession of Jerusalem; and God shows that, while He may use the stranger to chastise His people, He will turn round ere long and deal with their oppressive cruelty, because their mind was to destroy, while God employed them only to chaste. And inasmuch as there was pride of power, without conscience toward God, yea also the main source of idolatry, so Babylon cannot escape, but is the first among the Gentiles summoned to judgment. Thus, what we are now entering upon is not the divine scrutiny of His house in Israel, but the judgment of the world and of the nations, and hence right early of Babylon. Observe, however, that if the Spirit of God takes notice of what was then befalling the Jews (expressly noticing the ruin of this land and people that was imminent, when they should be taken captive to Babylon), for all that, He never confines Himself to any blows, however grave, that were then struck.

This indeed is just a characteristic difference between what is of God and what is of man. If man speaks, there are necessary limits to the application of his words. In what

God says there is invariably a germinant sense, deepening farther on, evidencing what God has in view to show what He is and to glorify Christ. This, I think, is the meaning of the scriptural canon in 2 Peter i. 20: "No prophecy is of any private interpretation." Apply it but to some particular event, and you overlook the purpose of God; while it may doubtless include such an event, all prophecy looks onward to the counsels of God in reference to the glory of His Son. Hence the holy prophets needed inspiration in the strictest sense; for whose eye could look onward unerringly and speak of the future according to God? Such therefore is the aim of the Spirit's testimony. Indeed this is true of all scripture; for Christ is the object of God in giving scripture at all; He is not merely thinking of man, or of his salvation, blessed as it is; nor of Israel only, nor of the church only, but of His Son.

God thinks of Christ, who is more precious to Himself than all besides. It is in virtue of Christ that there can be a purpose brought to issue in or out of such a world as this. For it is not possible that the creature itself could have any intrinsic value in the sight of God. That which merely flows out of the sovereign will and almighty hand of God can cease to be. He that made can destroy; but when you come to Christ, you have that which nothing can, we may reverently say, destroy; and all the efforts of man or Satan to destroy and dishonour Him have been only turned, in the mighty and gracious wisdom of God, into a display of all-surpassing glory. Thus we arrive at the great truth for our every-day walk. We have to do with One now, whose love nothing can exhaust, whose ways too are perfect; we have to do with Him day by day, to wait on Him, to expect from Him, to trust Him, to make sure of His admirable care for us. Christ is worthy that our hearts should confide in Him, and He cannot be confided in without blessing flowing out. Thus God proves Himself greater than all that can be against us. Apart from Christ there is nothing even that He Himself made but what, connected with man on earth, soon has a cloud over it. Nay, it is wider still. Angels left their first estate. Look at any creature-height or

beauty apart from Christ, and what is the security ? Is not the earth, once so fair, a wilderness ? Is not man a mortal wreck ? Israel were brought out into the wilderness to keep a feast to Jehovah ; but they made and worshipped a golden calf, to His deep dishonour. In the church of God, called to the unity of the Spirit and the reflection of Christ's heavenly glory here below, what breaches, divisions, sects, heresies, confusions, and every evil work ! What guilty ignorance of the Father, what bold denial of the Son, what flagrant sin against the Holy Ghost ! and all this going on at an aggravated, accelerating ratio, as the apostasy draws near and the manifestation of the man of sin in its final form.

We look as it were on the closing history of Christendom upon the eve of that judgment that slumbers not ; but, thank God, we await first of all our Saviour from heaven—a blessed hope which may be forgotten by worldliness and unbelief, but will never fade, because it is not founded on anything short of the Lord Jesus. He is coming ; and as surely as He does, we have the turning-point of all blessing reached for our bodies and all things, even as now by faith for our souls. What a discovery it has been to some of us, that prophecy has the self-same centre that the rest of scripture has, and that its centre in Christ is so much the more conspicuous as it cannot content itself with past accomplishment, but ever looks onward to the grand fulfilment in the future ! No matter what it may be, all acquires importance because God is thinking of His beloved Son. And His Son is to strike the last strokes of judgment ; He will deal with man, first by providential means, then in person.

From the chapter now before us we may gather these two things plainly enough—a preparatory application to the times of the prophet or near them, but the only adequate fulfilment reserved for the great day, which is still future. For instance, in verses 6—10, one can see there are greater signs than have ever been verified. These things cannot fairly be said to have literally taken place ; yet the Spirit of God does not hesitate to connect them with Babylon's fall. To talk of hyperbole or exaggeration is to prove utter ignorance of scripture and of the

power of God. I could understand an infidel talking such language as this; but the moment you begin to suppose that the Spirit of God could willingly set Himself to exaggerate, the authority of the whole word is shaken. If He magnifies a temporal judgment, beyond the facts, how do I know that He does not exaggerate grace and eternal redemption? And where is the ground, in this case, for solid peace with God? Is it, or is it not, a fixed principle, that the Holy Ghost always speaks the truth? Then, along with this, we must take care that we understand its application. Thus, to restrain this scene to the past judgment of Babylon, is to limit the word of God, and make the Spirit seem to exaggerate. But this is merely our misunderstanding and error. How momentous, then, it is that we should be in malice children, in understanding men! We may well shrink with horror from a pathway that leads to an end so dishonouring to the word of God. On the other hand, that the Holy Ghost did really speak inclusively of a past accomplishment I hold to be just as certain as that He was looking onward to far more than that.

In verses 15—17 it is a temporal judgment that is spoken of; a description not of what will be when Jehovah judges, but of the lawless way in which man wreaks his wrath upon his fellow.

Verses 18, 19 present a total destruction. Babylon has been judged. An almost unprecedented disaster and destruction fell on that proud city; and this, we know, was under God effected by the junction of the Medes and Persians, with Cyrus for their leader.

But plainly Jehovah here uses the strongest language to show that it is *His* day. In reading the New Testament as well as the Old, it is of the utmost moment to understand “the day of the Lord” in its real character and import. It is not the same thing as the Lord’s “coming” to receive us. When He comes, the dead saints are raised and the living ones are changed, which is not “the day of the Lord,” nor ever so called in scripture. There is one chapter (2 Peter iii.) where there might seem to be some difficulty; but the difficulty is really from this

very confusion ; for when you distinguish the two phrases and thoughts here as elsewhere, all is plain. What the scoffers of the last days say, is "Where is the *promise of His coming*," &c. What the Spirit of God replies is, that the *day of the Lord* shall come, and come like a thief in the night-to judge wickedness upon the earth. They make light of the Christians who are looking for this bright hope, their Master's coming ; but the Holy Ghost threatens them with the terrible day of the Lord. The Lord is never represented as coming like a thief in the night except when judgment is distinctly spoken of, as in Sardis. (Rev. iii.) In 1 Thessalonians v. the Spirit brings in the comparison of the thief when He speaks of the day of the Lord coming upon the world, not in relation to the saints who wait for Christ.

The real truth is that the expression "coming of the Lord" may apply to His presence before He is manifested to every eye, but "day of Jehovah" pertains to that part and aspect of His action which inflicts just vengeance upon the world, and then presents Him judging in righteousness. Here it is the day of Jehovah ; and, therefore, of darkness and destruction to sinners ; there is not a word about the righteous dead being raised, or the living changed ; all that which is proper to the New Testament you find there, and there only. In the Old Testament you have the dealing of the Lord with Israel, judging what was wrong, but finally blessing, and patient longsuffering with the Gentiles, where He took notice of them at all, till the day of visitation come. This accounts for the language of Isaiah xiii. The Spirit of God has in His view Jehovah's judgment of the whole world ; and, therefore, it is called "the day of Jehovah." It will be the termination of all the space allowed to man's will and self-exaltation. It will be the manifestation of God's moral ways when all that is high shall be abased, and Jehovah and the lowly that He loves shall be exalted for ever. But while the Spirit of God goes onward to that day, there was enough to mark Babylon devoted to destruction by a direct intervention of God, near at hand. The truth of the prophecy was thus witnessed by a special

accomplishment in those days. Babylon then became first like Sodom and Gomorrha. If it was physically not so manifestly a divine judgment, it was morally a stupendous event which changed the whole course of the world's history. The downfall of Persia was in no way a type of the final judgment of the world, neither was the fall of Greece of any striking significance in this respect. The judgment of Rome will be so, of course; but this is yet future. It has been, as it were shaken repeatedly and brought low; but then it has revived. The day is coming when Rome will rise again into splendour and amazing power, when it will be the centre of a revived empire. But it will then rise to meet its final doom from the hands of God. The past ruin of Babylon is a type of this destruction of Rome. When Babylon fell, the children of Israel were delivered; there was nothing of the sort when Persia yielded to Greece, or Greece to Rome.

Thus the fall of the first great power of the Gentiles is a type of the doom of the last, when Israel will have been finally set free, a converted people, and delivered spiritually as much as nationally, thenceforward made to express the glory of Jehovah upon the earth.

So in the next chapter (xiv.) the Spirit of God goes forward to Israel's deliverance. The connection is plain. The overthrow of Babylon involves the emancipation of Israel. It has thus much greater importance than the history of any ordinary power; and the past Babylon is simply a type of the fall of that vast power, its final heir, which is to the last the enslaver of the Jews and the master of the holy city. Israel are yet to have as their servants the very persons who formerly enslaved them themselves. Expecting this glory for Israel, and this mighty deliverance for the people of the Jews, one can understand how they shall "take up this proverb against the king of Babylon." For he sets forth no other than the last head of the beast, just as Nebuchadnezzar was the first. Although the king of Babylon typifies the person who will finally have the Jews as his captives, it would be a great mistake to suppose that it is to be a king of the Babylon of Shinar. I refer to

this now, merely to show that it rests upon a false principle. Many have the thought that there will be a re-establishment of oriental Babylon in the last days. They suppose there will be a literal city in the plain of Shinar. This I believe to be fundamentally false. The New Testament shows us by evident remarks what the future one will be, and contrasts the Apocalyptic Babylon with that of the Chaldees. The Babylon of the old world was built upon a plain; the future Babylon is characterized by the seven mountains it sits on. Thus every one of common information would understand the locality of the future Babylon. There is but one city that has had proverbially this title attached to it among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians. Everywhere it has acquired a designation from the circumstance; so that if you speak of the seven-hill city, there is hardly an educated child but would answer, "It must be the famous city of Rome." This is the city which is to occupy in the last days the same kind of importance that Babylon had in the beginning of the age. It began with Babylon and ends with the person that is called, in the Book of Revelation, "the Beast." There were four beasts in Daniel, but one is called "*the* Beast," as indeed but the last existed; and if it became extinct, it was to rise again and be present once more before its judgment. Now God makes the old enemy to be a type of the new one that menaces them. The final holder of the power of Babylon thus becomes a type of him who will wield the same power against the people of God in the last days. In Revelation xvii. the general principle is exceeding clear, without the violent supposition of a literal metropolis in Chaldea; where man would have not merely to build the city, but, first of all, to create seven hills. Another thing the Spirit of God speaks of is, the reigning of the city over the kings of the earth, and not of the control exercised over the empire, under the symbol of the woman riding the beast.

Finally the Apocalyptic Babylon will shift from a heathenish character to an anti-Christian one. What we have in Isaiah furnishes the groundwork for that which meets us in the Revelation. Thus the strong language that is used in verses

12—14, could scarcely be said to have been exhausted in Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. There was pride and self-exaltation in the one, and most degrading and profane luxury in the other; but what we have here will be fully verified in the last days and not before. After taking this place of power, the lofty one is to be abased as no Babylonish monarch ever was. (See ver. 15.)

I do not enter into the rest of the chapter further than to point out another declaration in verses 24, 25. Some suppose that the king of Babylon and the Assyrian are one and the same person; it is a common mistake, and particularly among men of learning. But it is clear that the later statement is something added to the fall of him of Babylon who has been already judged. Then the Assyrian follows, who is dealt with summarily in Jehovah's land. This agrees perfectly with what may be gathered from other parts of God's word.

Now, if you look at the past history of Israel, the Assyrian came up first; his army was destroyed, and himself sent back into his own land, there to be slain by his rebellious sons in the house of his god. The astonishing destruction of his hosts was typical of the fall of "the Assyrian" in the last days, but only a type of it. This was considerably before Babylon was allowed of God to become supreme. It was after the disappearance of Nineveh that Babylon sprang up into the first place. The Assyrian never gained the supremacy of the world, but Babylon did, as a sovereign grant from God, after the royal house of David had become the helper on of idolatry, following the people of God in their love—the abomination of the heathen. God told, as it were, the king of Babylon to take the whole world to himself. Babylon was always most conspicuous for its many idols; but as the chosen witness had become idolatrous, the worst might as well have supremacy as the best. Babylon was thus exalted to the empire of the world. Its active enmity and idolatry could hardly be thought a claim on the true God: on the other hand, it was not allowed to hinder its rise in God's sovereignty into the place of the government of the world. This was, in fact, subsequent to the destruction of the Assyrian, which

we have seen before in other chapters (viii., x.). Here, on the contrary, Babylon is judged first; then the Assyrian comes up and is smitten in the land of God's people. Why is this? Because the Spirit of God is here taking the circumstances of the Assyrian as well as the king of Babylon, not as a history of the past, but as looking onward to the last days; and in the last days the king represented by Babylon will be destroyed first, and then the power of the Assyrian will be broken last of all. This perfectly agrees with the scene as a typical or prophetic picture of the last days. Whereas, if you confine it to the past, it would not tally, and there could be no right understanding of it. While the Spirit of God speaks of the Assyrian subsequently to Babylon, it is certain that in past history the Assyrian fell first in order and Babylon afterwards. By and by Babylon will be smitten in the last holder of the Beast's power, and this in connection with the Jews; while the power that answers to the king of Assyria will come up after that, when God is occupying Himself with the ten tribes of Israel. The Babylonian despot and the Assyrian then are two distinct enemies of the Jews, and types of two different foes in the last days, the one before, the other after, they are in recognized relationship with Jehovah.

The Lord grant that we may be enabled to profit by all scripture, using it for instruction and warning, as well as refreshment and joy. All plans for worldly ease and honour will end only in destruction and bitter disappointment. Our business is to be working out what God gives us to do. He is saving souls to be the companions of Christ in heaven. Our responsibility is to be carrying out His thoughts of mercy towards sinners, and His love towards those that cleave to the name of His Son.

The division of chapters is singularly unhappy here; for the last five verses of chapter xiv. form a section to themselves, and the two following chapters are but one subject. What adds to the confusion is the insertion of the sign of the new paragraph at verse 29 of chapter xiv.; whereas verse 28 really pertains to

the new burden—not to Babylon or the Assyrian, but to God's judgment on the Philistines.

"In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent."

The death of Ahaz might naturally excite the hopes of his neighbours, the Philistines, who had been put down by the strong hand of his grandfather Uzziah. Of him it is written in 2 Chronicles xxvi. 4, that "he did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him prosper. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunims. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah; and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly."

And now not only Uzziah but Ahaz were gone; "the rod of him that smote" the land of the Philistines was "broken." The enemy had learnt to despise Judah in the days of faithless Ahaz. "For Jehovah brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel: for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against Jehovah." Who was his son that they should fear him? Let them not rejoice however; "for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." The primary accomplishment of this was in the reign of Hezekiah, of whom it is recorded (2 Kings xviii. 8) that "he smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."

But I see no reason whatever to suppose that this burden is an exception to the rest; especially as the strength of the language points to a mightier destruction than that inflicted by that pious king of Judah. Its proper fulfilment therefore

awaits the latter day. And then to the full will be seen the two-fold application of divine power, when, on the one hand, the first-born of the poor shall feed and the needy shall lie down in safety; and on the other, Jehovah will not merely break the rod but kill the root of Philistia with famine and slay its remnant. In the next verse (31) the prophet bursts forth with the utmost animation, calling on the gate to howl, and the city to cry out. "Thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times (or hosts)." Thus an overwhelming and vigorously-sustained force is threatened, which will sweep all before itself, as far as the Philistines are concerned. Here too the end is deliverance for the godly Jews. "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations? That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust [or find refuge] in it."

CHAPTERS XV., XVI.

IN chapters xv., xvi., we have the burden of Moab. What a picture of desolation and woe; and so much the more felt, because so unexpected and sudden! The Philistines were not more offensive to God because of the pleasure they took in the calamities of Israel, than the Moabites in their excessive self-security and pride. They were among the neighbouring races which were allowed to harass Israel for their unfaithfulness during the Judges, till David reduced them. Afterwards they took advantage of the revolt of the ten tribes, to shake off their subjection, first to Judah, and finally to Israel; but they, like others, fell under the Babylonish conqueror, as we may gather from a comparison of Jer. xlviij., which adopts and enlarges these very predictions of the older prophet, and serves thus to fix the epoch of their application. “Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, he [Moab] is undone; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, he is undone.”* (Chap. xv. 1.) Such seems to me the force a little more exactly. Broken thus in their strongholds, one after another surprised to their dismay, the people are supposed to go to their places to weep, with deep and universal signs of mourning in public and in private; and this to the extremities of their land, the very soldiers crying out like the weaker sex. (Ver. 2—4.) The prophet, or whosoever is personated by him, cannot but feel for the disasters of Moab; and the graphic sketch of desolation and want and carnage is continued to the end of the chapter. Even the escaped should find fresh disaster and destruction from the Lord (ver. 9). Extreme humiliation is the chastening of excessive pride.

* Dr. Henderson prefers to render it thus: “Assuredly in the night of assault Ar-Moab is destroyed; assuredly in the night of assault Kir-Moab is destroyed.” They were the two main fortresses of Moab, the storming of which decided the fate of the people.

Chapter xvi. opens with a call to Moab to send the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela in the wilderness unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. I see not the smallest reason to justify the notion of an allusion to the lamb as the well-known type of the Messiah, still less that He is here spoken of as the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, as if we were reading the Revelation. This appears to be a reference to their ancient tribute. They were subdued by David of old, and sent him gifts. "And he smote Moab and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he put to death, and with one full line to keep alive; and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts." (2 Sam. viii. 12.) Later on in the history, we find that the king of Moab was a sheep master, and used to render to the king of Israel the tribute of 100,000 lambs, and as many rams with the wool. The prophet seems here to remind Moab of its obligation; otherwise their daughters must prepare for still greater calamities. (Ver. 1, 2.) "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And in mercy shall the throne be established; and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness." (Ver. 3—5.) The prophet, in his second counsel, touches on the dire offence, in Jehovah's eyes, of Moab. Had he sheltered the outcasts of Israel? or had he taken advantage of their distressful flight to smite and betray them? The prophetic Spirit looks through Hezekiah to the true Son of David, who shall reign in righteousness when the last oppressive spoiler has come to his end.

The verses that follow (6—12) detail once more the pride of Moab and his most humiliating downfall, when, spite of his arrogance, "Moab shall howl for Moab; every one shall howl," and the country shall vie with the towns in extent of devastation; and the prophet weeps afresh at the sight of the wretched-

ness of the once lofty foe, who prays in his sanctuary ; "but he shall not prevail."

The last verse shows that, whatever may be the full bearing of this burden on Moab, "within three years, as the years of an hireling [*i.e.*, I suppose, exactly measured out, as would be the fact in such a case], and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude ; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble." That this was accomplished to the letter, there can be no doubt to the believing mind, though we know not the instrumentality, whether the king of Judah or the Assyrian.

But as little need one question that the fulfilment of all the terms of the prophecy will be in the grand future crisis ; for it is certain that the final king of the north will fail to reach Moab, and that the children of Israel under the Messiah *are to* lay their hands upon him. Compare Isaiah xi. 14 with Daniel xi. 41. Nothing more clearly proves that, if unknown or little known now, there will remain representatives of that nation in the end of the age to take their part in that catastrophe, humiliating to man but to the glory of God, when the chosen people, in their totality, shall be saved, and restored by divine mercy to the land of their inheritance and their promised supremacy. It is certain, from a later strain of our prophet (xxv. 10—12), the epoch of which is the day of Jehovah, that the final ruin of Moab will only be at the time when He exalts Israel to their promised place of everlasting supremacy on the earth.

CHAPTER XVII.

ASSUMING that these prophecies, whatever past accomplishment they may have received, have for their centre the day of the Lord, how are we to meet the difficulty about these various peoples and cities which once troubled Israel? How are we to account for these prophecies looking onward to a future day, seeing that they no longer, or very feebly, exist. The answer is, that the very same difficulty applies to Israel. No one knows clearly or certainly where the ten tribes are; neither does it seem any one's business to search beforehand. We may leave them in the obscurity that God has put them in. We know, if we believe His word, that as surely as He has preserved the dispersed remnant of the two tribes, so will He bring out of their hiding-place the descendants of the ten. We know that not only the Jews proper are to be restored, but also the old nationality of Israel. To this the *δωδεκάφυλον* hope to come; the full twelve tribes making one nation in the land, and one King shall be King to them all. "And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Every letter of the promises will be accomplished. Scripture cannot be broken.

Even if we saw no signs, why doubt? Do we *need* such tokens? It is a proof of feebleness of faith, if we ask a sign. God's word is the best assurance; on this let us take our stand. If God has said that so it shall be, we have a right to expect that He will bring from their recesses the ten tribes, and will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them. We are far from being fully acquainted even with the little world on which we live. Long ago, there were parts of the world better known than they have been till of late. Thus the early accounts of Africa and Central Asia, for instance, have been largely confirmed by recent researches. God may have the ten tribes in some of these little

explored regions; or they may emerge unexpectedly out of a nation with which they have long been confounded; but we are not bound to show where they are. God has declared that He will bring them into their own land, and this in a peculiar manner; for they are to pass through the wilderness again, and there be purged of the transgressors in their midst, who thus never reach the land, instead of being destroyed in it, like the apostate Jews. Thus, there is a totally different destiny for the ten tribes as compared with the two. If God will accomplish both, nothing will be easier than for the same God to define the descendants of their old Gentile enemies, whether near or farther off. The truth is, it is the very same principle of faith that accepts and accounts for both; as it is mere incredulity which finds a difficulty in either. These remarks apply to almost all these chapters.

Again, some strangely misunderstand the bold figures of the prophets, as if employed to cast their subjects into an enigmatic, if not ambiguous, mould. This is a great error. For they are not to throw a cloud over things, but to give emphasis and energy. Many whose object is to deter Christians from reading the prophecies, talk much of these tropes, as if their presence was evidence enough to show that the meaning is doubtful. Nothing can be more contrary to the fact; for in the inspired writings, as in others, figures are used, by a kind of poetical license, to illustrate, adorn, and enforce the sense, and in no case to mystify. Figures are quite as definite, and are only more forcible than plain, literal terms. The very speech of ordinary life abounds in metaphor and simile; but, of course, the poetical character of the prophecies gives occasion to their more frequent use.

Again, the difficulty of scripture does not lie so much in its figurative style as in the depth of its thoughts. In the word of God there is perhaps nothing more profound than the first chapter of John. Yet what first strikes one there is the exceeding simplicity of this scripture as a matter of language. It used to be the common habit of those who taught the Greek language in some parts of the country to make this gospel a

sort of initiatory exercise. Notwithstanding, in all the Bible you can find no revelation or handling of truth more full of depths, none that will cause the really spiritual to stand more amazed, however attractive the grace it displays in Christ. This will show how entirely unfounded is the notion of such as fancy it is a simple question of words. The divine truth of scripture is the difficulty, not its obscure language. It is difficult because of our darkness morally, because of our want of acquaintance with the mind of God, judging appearance by the natural senses or the mind, instead of receiving things from God, reading His words in the light of Christ. So far from the prophetic scriptures being the most difficult part, they are much easier than is commonly imagined. It is a great thing to begin with believing them; intelligence follows and grows apace. If we may compare the various parts of scripture, the New Testament is without doubt the deepest of God's communications; and of the New Testament none exceed the writings of St. John for penetration into the knowledge of what God is; and of the writings of St. John, who would treat the epistles and the gospel as less profound than the Apocalypse? None, I am persuaded, but such as are too superficially acquainted with any of them, to warrant their pronouncing a judgment.

This may encourage some to take up the prophecies with a more child-like spirit, always bearing in mind that God looks onward to the future crisis that ushers in "the day of the Lord." He thinks of His beloved Son; and that which gives importance to the prophecies is that they unfold the scene of His interests. The Jews are the people of whom the Lord Jesus deigned to be born as to the flesh. They have proved what they were to Him, He has now to prove what He will be to them. He means to have an earthly people (Israel), as well as a heavenly (the Church), for his glory. The word of God stops not short of this. If it is not fulfilled, yet it is sure in the keeping of God, who has already given a partial accomplishment. Hence we get the principle for interpreting all prophecy; it is to be for the glory of the Lord Jesus in connexion with Israel, and the nations upon the earth. I am speaking now of Old Testament pro-

phecy. The New Testament takes another character—the Lord Jesus in connection with Christendom, also, besides confirming the oracles about Israel. This may show why Jehovah attaches importance to a little place or people on the prophetic field. Israel was much in His eyes, because of the Messiah; and His own counsels are not dead if they sleep. Hence, too, when God removes the veil from His ancient people Israel, their old antagonists will begin to appear. This is, to my mind, full of interest. There is a resurrection of every individual. The body will be raised for the manifestation of everything that was done in the body, for it is by the body that the soul acts. Even so will it be with these nations. There is a destiny analogous; they are to reappear when Israel does, and God will distinguish them according to their original names, and not those they may bear in the process of human history. Jehovah will go up to the sources: hence we have their judgment connected with the last days, and not merely that which fell upon them long ago. They go down to the close. Some may have been more completely accomplished in the past than others; but with this difference, they all look onward to the future.

The last generation will do as their fathers; then judgment will fall. Thus it is that God will deal with the nations. They will manifest the same hostility to Israel, the same pride against God, as formerly. This may seem a hard principle to some, but it is most righteous. If a child has grown up, knowing his father's dishonour, hearing of his disgrace and punishment, would not that sin be most peculiarly odious in his eyes, if any right feeling existed? The public example of his father's evil ways would be ever before him. But if the son trifled with it, and used it as an encouragement to walk in the same path, is it not just that there should be a still more severe punishment exacted of that son? Besides having the universal conscience of men, he had special witness in his own family, which the heart of a child ought to have felt and pondered deeply.

This is just the principle of God's ways in government. Man ought to take the more earnest heed from the past; and

God, who deals righteously, will judge according to that which man ought to have remembered. He ought to have used the witness of the past as a warning for the future. These nations will then reappear, and, instead of recalling their fathers' ways for their own warning and profit, they take exactly the same road, and once more will endeavour to root out and destroy the people of God.

So it is in Isaiah xvii. Damascus, which was to the north of the Holy Land, was the very ancient and celebrated city of Syria. (See Gen. xv.) It was to be made a heap of ruins—the cities of Aroer a place for flocks. (Ver. 1, 2.) And, as of old, Syria and Ephraim conspired against the realm of David's son to their own discomfiture, so once more the remarkable feature of this judgment is, that God will deal with His people as well as with their old ally. "The fortress also shall cease from *Ephraim*, and the kingdom from *Damascus*, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith Jehovah of hosts. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim." He will gather out all scandals from them and punish the transgressors; He will employ their enmity to purge that threshing-floor of the land of Israel; He will deal in a judicial manner with His people. The nations may lure themselves and each other on with the hope that it is going hard with Israel; but their conspiracy will be offensive to God, however He may use it for Israel's good. This is here described. "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith Jehovah, God of Israel. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images." (Ver. 6—8.)

Thus it is plain there is, at this time, a discriminating judgment proceeding in the land of Israel. Compare chapter xxviii, where the course of the overflowing scourge is described. "In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough ; and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips: in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow." (Ver. 9—11.) But now comes the retribution. "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us." (Ver. 12—14.) Let the nations gather their multitudes; let them rush on like mighty waters. But the rebuke comes; and they flee and are chased, yea, like thistle-down before the whirlwind. "And behold at evening-time trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us." When was all this accomplished in the past, from the day that Isaiah wrote? When was there the gathering of all these nations and their complete dispersion? On the contrary, Israel was broken and scattered, as were the Jews afterwards. Here it is not one nation triumphing over God's people, but a gathering of all nations, who seem but waiting for the morning to swallow up Israel; but before the morning they are not. Surely it shall be; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR chapter is connected with the overthrow of the nations, predicted at the close of the preceding section, and yet forms a scene sufficiently distinct to be treated separately. It is a deeply interesting appendix to it, as is plain from its being no new burden, which opens chapter xix. and distinguishes the judgment of Egypt from the subject before us. This it is well to notice, because some Christians, and among them Vitringa, have fallen into the error of supposing that Egypt is the “land shadowing with wings,” addressed in verse 1, and that the Egyptians are the people to whom the message is sent in verse 2, some of them being even brought to the grateful worship of God in verse 7. The reader need not be surprised at this confusion in a commentator so learned and otherwise eminent; for there is hardly a portion of Isaiah which has given rise to greater discord and more evident bewilderment among men of note, from Eusebius of Cæsarea (who saw in it the land of Judea in apostolic times, sending Christian doctrine to all the world, an interpretation founded on the *ἀποστέλλων . . . ἐπιστολὰς βιβλίνας* of the LXX.) down to Arias Montanus, who applied it to America, converted to Christ by the preaching and arms of the Spaniards!

The right understanding of the chapter depends on seeing that the Jewish nation are those intended in verses 2, 7, and this, not in the days of Sennacherib, but in the future crisis. A few expressions, especially in verse 1, may be obscure, but the general scope is remarkably plain, and of exceeding interest.

It is true, as Henderson says, in common with very many, that the chapter is not a “woe,” like the preceding, but an appendage to it, with a call summoning attention—“Ho!”—to the land unnamed, which is to be described. The connexion seems plain between chap. xvii. 12—14 and xviii. 4—6. One nation shall seek to befriend the Jews in the time and way spoken of; but

that this is Ethiopia is wholly without and against the tests of the chapter. According to this the Jews would send swift messengers to acquaint Tirhakah of the destruction of Sennacherib's host, when it seemed on the point of taking Jerusalem. But this dislocates the chapter, makes the Ethiopians the prominent figure instead of the Jews, and terminates most inaptly with a present offered by the people who had received the message. It is enough to compare what I believe to be the true interpretation with this, in order to refute its pretensions.

"Ho, land shadowing (or, whirring) with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Cush" (*i.e.*, beyond the Nile and the Euphrates), means a country outside the limits of those nations which up to the prophet's day had menaced or meddled with Israel. Egypt and Assyria were the chief of those powers; for there was an Asiatic as well as an African Cush. The land in question lay (not necessarily contiguous to, but it might be far) beyond either of these countries. This comparatively distant land espouses the cause of Israel; but the protection would be ineffectual in result, however loud the proffer and the preparation. The use of "wings" to convey the idea of a cover for the oppressed or defenceless is too common to need proofs.

The second verse shows, in addition to the previous characteristics of this future ally of the Jews, that it is a maritime power; for it sends its ambassadors in light vessels (literally of "bulrush" or "papyrus") on the face of the waters. Israel is the object of their anxiety. "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto, a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled." The attempt to apply this description to the Egyptians, or the Ethiopians, has largely affected the view taken of the epithets here applied; but I see no sufficient reason to question the general accuracy of our authorized version, which, as predicating them of Israel, yields a clear and good sense. The difference between the land in the first verse, which sends out its messengers and ships, and the dispersed people, hitherto so formidable but of late ravaged by their impetuous enemies, stands on no minute points

of verbal criticism, but on the general bearing of the context which the English-reading Christian is quite able to judge.

Thus far we have seen the intervention of this unnamed land, described as the would-be protector of Israel, actively engaging with their swift ships it would seem on a friendly mission in quest of that scattered people.

But another enters the scene who puts an arrest on the zeal of man. (Ver. 3, 4.) Universal attention is demanded. Great events tremble in the balances. Signs are given, visibly and audibly. "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. For as Jehovah said unto me, I will take my rest, I will consider in my dwelling-place." God is not favouring this busy enterprise. Man is active: Jehovah, as it were, retires and watches. It is like the parching heat just before the lightning, as the dewy cloud in the heat of harvest: a moment of deep stillness and suspense, after immense efforts to gather in the Jews by the patronage of the maritime nation of verses 1 and 2. All has seemed to flourish: but what is man without God? "For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the springs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches." Thus total failure of the whole plan ensues. Everything in appearance betokened a speedy ingathering of good to Israel, and their national hopes seemed to be on the eve of being realized, when God brings all to nought, and lets loose the old passions of the Gentiles against His people. The issue is that "they shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." (Ver. 5. 6.)

It was not Jehovah's time; and yet it was. For "in that time shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto: a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion." Thus

will the presumptuous help of man be rebuked, as well as the renewed wrath of the nations once more preying on the poor but loved people of Jehovah. For as surely as they turn again to rend Israel, *He* will appear in the midst of the desolation, and with His own mighty hand accomplish that which man as vainly seeks to effect as to frustrate. The Jewish nation, at that very season, shall be brought a present to Jehovah; and they shall come not empty-handed, but emptied of self, with lowly, grateful hearts to Jehovah in mount Zion, after their final escape from Gentile fury, in His mercy which endures for ever.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX.

THE first of our chapters gives “the burden of Egypt,” and is followed, in the second, by a personal sign enjoined on the prophet, as a token of the degradation soon to befall Egypt and Ethiopia. The general drift is so clear as to render prolonged remarks altogether needless.

“Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt.” The prophet thus boldly and with the fullest moral truth sets forth that sure overthrow of the great realm of the old world’s prudence, and debasing idolatry, and abundant natural riches. What availed their boasted bulwarks and their watery barriers, if Jehovah, who “rideth upon a swift cloud,” dooms Egypt to humiliation and decay? Worse than idle their appeal to their false gods: for their idols should be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt melt in its midst. Intestine division and civil war (ver. 2) should be added to the overwhelming assaults from without; and the downfall be consummated by infatuated counsels as well as the wasting away of all national spirit; for on their recourse in their distress to their old haunts of superstition and sorcery, God would shut them up to the hard bondage of cruel lords and a fierce king. (Ver. 1—4.)

But the hand of Jehovah should be not only upon the defences of the country, but upon its internal supports, and this in all that was their glory and their confidence. For is not this Ezekiel’s “great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is my own, and I have made it for myself?” Surely it is the same, of whom Isaiah here predicts, “the waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by

the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. - The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish." (Ver. 5—10.)

The prophet next (ver. 11) proceeds to taunt this haughty power in that for which, most of all, it stood high in its own conceit and the reputation of men. For who has not heard of "the wisdom of the Egyptians?" Who does not know of their science and civilization while the most renowned lands of the west which earliest aspired to the sovereignty of the world had not yet emerged from their condition of wild, untutored barbarism? "Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?" "Where are they? where are thy wise men?" is the piercing challenge of the prophet; "and let them tell thee now, and let them know what Jehovah of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt."

Alas! how many now are wrapped up in the same carnal security. How many in our day, like the wise counsellors of Egypt, are caught in their own craftiness, too wise to heed the sure and solemn words of divine prophecy; not wise enough to guard themselves from foolish superstition, or still more foolish incredulity! Is it not a maxim among the sages of Christendom, that prophecy cannot be known till the event accomplishes it and fixes its interpretation? Than which notion, I dare to say, none can be produced less reasonable in itself or more flatly contrary to the word of God. Not a believer in the Old Testament but protests against the sinful error; for not a soul then was justified who did not look onward, trusting his soul and spiritual all on that which was as yet necessarily in the womb of the future—the coming of the woman's Seed, the Messiah. And are believers of the New Testament called of God to be less trustful, less realizing what is coming, with incomparably more light of revelation? What! we, to whom God *has* revealed by

the Spirit, that which, the brightest of old was compelled to say, “eye *had not* seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into man’s heart to consider”? And even on grounds of reason, of which some are so vainglorious, what can be more opposed to it; seeing that God has beyond controversy given His people prophetic revelation? Is this alone, of all scripture, to be put under human ban? Even on grounds of personal danger, the suicidal folly of such scepticism as this is most apparent; for as the great central point of prophecy is the nearness of the day of the Lord, which is to judge all the pride, and irreligion, and idolatry, and rebellion against God found then on earth, and specially in Christendom, it will be too late for men, before they believe, to await that event which will prove the truth of the prophecies in their own destruction. In short, in every point of view, the maxim is as false as it is perilous. It really amounts to blotting out all direct use of prophecy whatsoever: for it refuses to hear its warning till its voice is wholly changed. Prophecy accomplished becomes in effect history, rather than prophecy; no small value of which is the silencing of God’s enemies, rather than, while unfulfilled, the admonition and comfort of His people.

But to return. “The princes of Zoan [the ancient royal city of Egypt, named Tanis in profane authors] are become fools, the princes of Noph [Moph, or Memphis, Hosea ix. 6] are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.” They are judicially confounded of God in their policy.

Now, I am not disposed to deny a measure of accomplishment in the time of the prophet. Only let not this be allowed to exclude the complete fulfilment which yet remains to be made good. This germinant inclusive style, we have seen, is the habit of Isaiah, as indeed of the prophets. Enough was then accomplished for a stay to the faithful; but it was no

more than a testimony to that full and punctual payment which God will yet render, in honour both of His own words, and of the Lord Jesus, when His manifested glory dawns and His world-kingdom comes. (Rev. xi.) "In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of Jehovah of hosts, which he hath determined against them." Egypt has its part to play in the tremendous convulsions which precede Jehovah's appearing; and to this our chapter looks onward, with which compare Daniel xi. 40—43. Out of that land shall He gather some of His outcast people (Isaiah xi.), and in the process, as we know, destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His mighty wind shake His hand over the river, smiting it in its seven streams.

But mercy shall rejoice over judgment; and at the very time when Egypt shall be as women trembling at the shaking of Jehovah's hand, and the very mention of the land of Judah shall strike terror, "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Jehovah of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto Jehovah because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And Jehovah shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto Jehovah, and perform it. And Jehovah shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to Jehovah, and shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." Thus evidently shall Jehovah then deliver and revive Egypt.

The efforts of interpreters to explain these verses are as

manifold as they are vain: and justly are they doomed to darkness who see not the link with Christ, and with Christ the glory of His people Israel then, if they despise Him now. Origen, Eusebius, &c., interpreted it of the flight into Egypt (Matt. ii.), and of the overthrow of idolatry and spread of Christianity there also; Jerome embraces along with this an application to the wasting of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. Moderns generally apply it in substance as Jerome did (partly historically, of the disasters under Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Psammetichus, or the Romans; and partly mystically, of the triumphant spread of the gospel past, present, or future). These speculations do not seem to call for refutation: to state them is to condemn them sufficiently. The true reference to the future crisis on the earth is yet more confirmed by the blessed intimations of the closing verses. “In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom Jehovah of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” It is not a heavenly scene, but earthly. It is not the present church condition, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and Christ is all and in all, but a future state of large yet graduated blessing of nations. It is not this dispensation, where tares are mingled with the wheat, but the coming age when all scandals are removed from the scene where the Great King reigns in righteousness. That nation, so proud of its natural wisdom, the old oppressor and frequent snare of Israel, shall be humbled to the dust, and out of the dust cry to the Lord God of Israel, who shall send them a mighty deliverer, and they shall know Him and worship Him acceptably, who smote them but will heal them with a great salvation. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, Jehovah’s name will be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto it and a pure offering; for His name shall be great among the

heathen. No wonder therefore that there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah—a sign and a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in that land.

And what of that later oppressor of Israel? Has Jehovah but one blessing for the stranger foe? Has He not reserved a blessing for the Assyrian? Yes, for the Assyrian also. The haughty rival of the north and east shall be brought into the rich blessing of Jehovah. “In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria.” Old jealousy and long-lasting animosity shall flee apace and for ever; intimacy and generous trust and mutual love shall cement the alliance that is founded on Jehovah truly known. “And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.” Happy, though none *then* be despised and poor! “In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria.” That is, Israel shall form one of the trio here specified and stamped with singular favour in the millennial day. For indeed Jehovah shall bless them, “Saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” Thus again is Abraham’s blessing verified and manifested. “I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” But even here, it appears to me, the due place of Israel is maintained, and the ranks of the others nicely distinguished in God’s wisdom, however large His goodness to the rest; for Israel has the glorious title of Jehovah’s inheritance, if Egypt be called and Assyria created for His praise.

From chapter xx. we learn that the Assyrian ravaged Egypt (with the Ethiopians), leading his captives in shame. History, I believe, is silent;* but not so prophecy, which declares that

* The Assyrian inscriptions remarkably illustrate the accuracy of the statement here. For it is now known that the conjectures of commentators, which

the land of Egypt shall not escape the king of the north, or last Assyrian, at the time of the end.

identified Sargon with Shalmaneser on the one side, or with Sennacherib or Esarhaddon on the other, are unfounded and erroneous. He was a monarch of no common energy; not only distinct from his immediate predecessor, Shalmaneser, but it would seem of a distinct family, and yet not Sennacherib but his father. The national annals indicate no allusion to his own father, which has been explained plausibly enough on the supposition that he contrived to substitute himself for his predecessor absent at the siege of Samaria, the conquest of which he claims in the inscription. And it is certainly worthy of note, as has been remarked, that in 2 Kings xviii. 9, 10, though Shalmaneser is said to have come up against Samaria and besieged it, the writer avoids saying that *he* took it. "And at the end of three years *they* took it. . . . And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel down to Assyria," &c. Though this had been done by two of the preceding monarchs, it is known that Sargon minutely details the settlement of 27,280 families from Samaria in his eastern dominions.

It may also be mentioned, that it is more than doubtful whether Tartan be a proper name. It means more probably "general," both here and in 2 Kings xviii. 16; as the other two given as proper names are appellatives of the chief eunuch and the chief butler, so this would point to a general employed by Sargon in taking Ashdod, as another was later by Sennacherib when Jerusalem was menaced. So Prof. Rawlinson in Smith's Dictionary.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN this chapter, and not a long one, are three sentences of judgment—on Babylon (ver. 1—10), on Dumah (ver. 11, 12), and on Arabia (ver. 13—17).

“The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through ; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. A grievous vision is declared unto me ; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam : besiege, O Media ; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.” There can be no doubt, it appears to me, that the great Chaldean capital is referred to; the command to the Medes and Persians to go up and besiege is one indication ; and so is yet more the graphic description of the sudden destruction, in verses 3—5, which turned the night of revelry into the pangs of terror and death for the dissolute king and his court. “Therefore are my loins filled with pain : pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth ; I was bowed down at the hearing of it ; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me : the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink : arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.” The ninth verse crowns the proof, and expressly names Babylon’s fall as the object intended. The prophet personifies the city or its people.

Nevertheless there is somewhat to be noted in the phrase used of the doomed mistress of the world ; especially as there seems to be an evident link between this enigmatic title, “the burden of the desert of the sea,” and that applied to Jerusalem, “the burden of the valley of vision,” in the beginning of chapter xxii. As the rise and glory of the first Gentile empire was only permitted sovereignly of God in consequence of hopeless idolatry in Judah and Jerusalem, so the judgment of

Babylon was the epoch of deliverance for the Jewish remnant, the type of the final dealings of God with the last holder of the power which began with the golden head of the great image. There is thus a correlation between these two cities—Jerusalem and Babylon—whether historical or symbolic; and the latter is designated “the desert of the sea,” the former “the valley of vision.” Jeremiah in his vision (chap. li. 42) beholds the sea come up upon Babylon, so as to cover her with the multitude of the waves. In fact, too, we know to what a waste this seat of human pride sunk, and so notoriously it remains until this day.

There is, in verses 6—10, set forth the twofold leadership of the coming invasion, and the twofold nationality of the armies that followed. The watchman in the vision attests his vigilance, and reports what he saw; which is followed by the solemn tidings of Babylon’s fall, and the prophet’s seal of the truth of the announcement.

Next comes “the burden of Dumah” (ver. 11, 12), which, from the connection, bordered on, if it did not belong to Idumea. “He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.” The Edomite cry is one of proud scorn and self-security. The brief answer is pregnant with serious expositation. Let them not trust to hopes of the bright morn; for the dark and dangerous night would be there also. Nevertheless, a door was still open for repentance. Let them “come again.”

As for “the burden upon Arabia,” little remark is needed. The forests of Arabia would be no more an effectual hiding-place from the storm than the rocks and mountain fastnesses of Edom. It is not only the travelling companies or caravans of Dedan which are cast on the pity and care of the men of Tema; but utter wasting within a year is pronounced on the mighty men of the children of Kedar.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER xxii. consists of a prophecy wholly directed against Jerusalem. There may have been some anticipation in the prophet's day, but it was partial. So much so was this the case, that Vitringa can only eke out an appearance of an historical answer by piecing together the invasion of the city by the Assyrians under Sennacherib, and that by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar; and even this by the strong inversion which places the Chaldean movement in verses 1—5 (comp. 2 Kings xxv. 4, 5) and the Assyrian in the part that follows (with which 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—5 corresponds). Granting this as a primary application, it affords a strong presumption that this chapter, like the last and all we have seen, points to the great day when the reckoning of nations will come in the morning, and of every individual throughout its course, even to the judgments of the secrets of the heart. It seems strange that believers should rest satisfied with so small an instalment from One who pays to the uttermost farthing. The spirit that treats as an illusion the expectation of a punctual fulfilment of these prophecies as a whole, in every feature save those expressly limited to a definite time in certain particulars, is either ignorance or scepticism, or, what is common enough, a mixture of both.

The city is shown us in the early verses, changed from its stir and tumultuous joy to the deepest uneasiness and deadly fear, the slain not fallen in battle but ignominious slaughter, all the rulers fled, but taken and bound, so that the prophet can but turn and weep alone in bitterness; for the trouble and perplexity sprang not from the dust but were by Jehovah of hosts.

The central verses expose the utter vanity and unpardonable sin of recourse to human measures by the people of God when He is dealing with them in judgment. Their only right place at such a time is to bow to His hand and accept the chastening He is pleased to inflict, always confident that mercy rejoices

against judgment and that the end of Jehovah is that He is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy. Here there was no humiliation in them, no recognition of Him or His ways. "And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did Jehovah, God of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by Jehovah of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith Jehovah, God of hosts." The one effort was to escape by policy—a fatal path for the people of God, which speedily falls into open licentious Sadduceeism.

The close of the chapter sets before us the setting aside of the unworthy Shebna who had crept into the place of chief minister, next to the throne, who lived only for self, and even after death still sought nothing but his own name and glory (ver. 15—19); whereon Jehovah's servant Eliakim is called to take the reins of government in his stead, a father to Jerusalem and Judah, with the key of David's house laid by Jehovah on his shoulder, with full authority and adequate power. We cannot here fail to recognize the type of Christ displacing the Antichrist; and the very fact of the past historical circumstances being put together without regard to mere date, as we have seen, and with personages introduced who officially were not the highest, yet described in terms which open out to a dominion and power beyond the highest, prepares one for the magnificent events of the latter day in the Holy Land, as the only complete fulfilment of the scripture before us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE last of these local judgments here comes before us—"the burden of Tyre." This city is the type of the world's commercial glory; wealthy, corrupt, and self-confident, but taken though not destroyed, after a long siege, by Nebuchadnezzar. Such historically is the destruction announced not here only but in Ezekiel xxvii.—xxviii. Tyre and the Tyrians were the centre of the merchandise of the ancient world, the emporium of all the commodities and the luxuries of that day, the link through "the ships of Tarshish" between the west and the east. Its fall therefore could not but affect painfully and universally the dwellers on the earth; and the rather, as trading rivals were fewer than now. Yet how would not in our day the overthrow of the proudest seat of modern commerce make itself felt to the ends of the earth? We know from elsewhere that the siege was prolonged for a term quite unusual, thirteen years: indeed we need not travel beyond the prophetic record (Ezek. xxix.)* to learn how severe a task it was for the Chaldean conqueror; but so much the greater was the moral effect of its fall. So that Tyre and Sidon remained the proverbial and most striking warning of divine judgment, as may be gathered from our Lord's reference.

"Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is

* Zechariah ix. alludes rather, it seems to me, to the Macedonian chief, who ravaged the sea-board cities of Phoenicia and of Palestine, north and south, so ruthlessly. This at least is the historic occasion; for the Holy Ghost there, as everywhere, has the closing conflicts in His eye, and the future triumphs of Israel under the Messiah. Some, it may be added, think that Isa. xxiii. refers to Shalmaneser's siege of Tyre; but this seems to the last degree improbable, as the city is seen soon after in an opulent and powerful state. Others even deny its capture by Nebuchadnezzar; but Ezek. xxix. 18 teaches not that he failed to take it, but that its results did not compensate for the time and toil, the Tyrian ships having carried off the treasures elsewhere.

revealed to them." (Ver. 1.) There seems to be no need for departing from the ordinary sense of Chittim, either here or in verse 12, in which the learned Bochart understands the Cutheans or Babylonians and the meaning here to be "from the land of the Cutheans doth their captivity come." Neither is there in Chittim any necessity to refer this burden to the sack of new or insular Tyre by Alexander the Great, as do Luther and others. The prophet calls the far-famed ships of Tarshish, first and repeatedly, to take up the dirge of the ruined mart for their merchandise, and intimates that though there was no house to receive them, nor haven for their ships to enter, the ill news would be revealed in the far west. "Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon that pass over the sea have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations." (Ver. 2, 3.) What a change, when silence reigned where once had thronged their neighbours, the merchants of Zidon, where the treasures of the enriching Nile were gathered, "a mart of nations," now a waste! "Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins." (Ver. 4.) Zidon was too nearly allied to Tyre, too intimately bound up with it, not to feel and suffer keenly; and as Tyre had been its boast heretofore, so now its degradation could not but darken their neighbours; since the very sea is by bold but happy figure made to bewail her desolation: whom had she pertaining to her lineage, now that Tyre was no more? "As the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre." (Ver. 5.) The Zidonians, though directly profited by Egypt more than all other foreign nations, would nevertheless grieve over the ruin of Tyre as much as over their great southern source of wealth. Verses 6, 7 finish these addresses with a direct appeal to the Tyrians themselves, taunting their haughty merchants with the reverse that awaited them, the just recompence of their deeds. "Pass ye over to Tarshish: howl ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity

is of ancient days ? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn." Far from being an attraction to the ships of Tarshish, they must go and howl there themselves, they the men of that sea-girt land, whose city rang with gaiety, and whose years of proud security were only less ancient than Zidon and yet more prosperous and eminent ! Yes, they must go, and trudge, sadly, painfully, in quest of some asylum in a strange land.

And why was this ? Who would smite and prostrate the proud city of Phœnicia ? "Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth ?" (Ver. 8.) The answer follows in verse 9. "Jehovah of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish : there is no more strength. He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms : Jehovah hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strongholds thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon : arise, pass over to Chittim ; there also shalt thou have no rest." (Ver. 9—12.) Here the moral reasons are not given in full : we must search other prophets for all. But the Lord's opposition to the proud is stated, His scorn for the glory of man, His slight of all trust in earthly strongholds. Even in exile the Tyrians should find no rest. In the next verse we have the instrumental means He meant to employ : "Behold the land of the Chaldeans ; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it, for them that dwell in the wilderness : they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof ; and he brought it to ruin." (Ver. 13.) The Chaldeans, who, in contrast with old Tyre, were nationally a people but of yesterday, are seen by the prophet bringing Tyre to ruin. Such appears to be the meaning, which is confirmed by the fresh call to grief of the ships of Tarshish in verse 14.

But the conqueror himself yields to an avenger. Babylon falls ; and the full term of seventy years, which beheld the returning remnant of Juda, had a revival in store for Tyre, but

a revival of her meretricious ways, pandering for gainful trade to all the luxurious habits and corruptions of the nations. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that Jehovah will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth." (Ver. 15—17.) Nevertheless the last verse intimates that even this prophetic scene, though so largely accomplished in the past, is not without its bright side in the day of joy to the whole earth. "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to Jehovah: it shall not be treasured nor laid up [as in former days, when conscienceless tricks of avarice dictated the manner and objects of her trade]; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before Jehovah, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing." The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, when the King shall greatly desire the beauty of His earthly Bride. (Psalm xlvi.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE prophet now launches into a larger theme. Hitherto we have had ten "burdens," the burdens of the nations from Babylon to Tyre, not without involving Jerusalem in those judgments which, starting from local circumstances, sweep on to the "end of the age," when God shall put down the rebellious pride of the earth. In the present chapter Isaiah enlarges the scene, with the land and people of Israel as the centre, so as to disclose not the great white throne before which the wicked dead stand and are judged, but the hour of the earth's universal retribution from God, "the day of Jehovah" in its unrestricted final sense, of which previous crises, as in the cases of Babylon and Egypt, were but the shadow and the earnest.

"Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him." There are evidently no limits here. As verse 1 shows us the earth wasted, confounded and prostrate under the divine dealing, so verse 2 indicates an unsparing overthrow of all grades among its inhabitants. "The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled: for Jehovah hath spoken this word." If it is hard work to apply such strong and comprehensive terms to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, as some conceive, still less can verse 4 be evaded. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away: the world languisheth and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish." How carefully too the Spirit guards against the too common resource of unbelief—the alleged hyperbole of an impassionate seer. "Jehovah hath spoken this word." (Ver. 3.)

Next, we have the moral ground on which God judged and

executed thus sternly. "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." It is no mere providential judgment but a most comprehensive and divine infliction, of which God has spoken almost since the beginning. Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these. The oft-threatened long-suspended blow will at length fall, as Isaiah here intimates, and Jude later still.

"The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction." (Ver. 7—12.) Such and so complete is the picture of woe. Desolation overspreads the country and the city alike. Nevertheless, as always, God reserves a remnant. "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land, among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the fires, even the name of Jehovah God of Israel in the isles of the sea." (Ver. 13—16.) It is manifestly a description of the righteous in Israel, who shall come into prominence as divine judgments mow down their proud oppressors.

Nevertheless verse 16 appears to show how deeply the prophet, foreshowing the exercised godly souls of that day, deplores the low condition of the remnant, and the fearful defection and ruin of the mass of Israel. "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous

dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Ver. 16—23.)

The entire chapter, especially the closing section (ver. 21—23), brings into the strongest evidence the hopeless difficulties of those who confound earthly things with heavenly, and refuse to see the portion in store for Israel in the latter day, when judgment has fallen on the habitable earth. Writers as early as Theodoret confess the ulterior scope of the prophecy, whatever measure of accomplishment they might consider it to have had in the past. "The discourse contains a double prophecy; for it points out both what was going on at different times among the enemies, and what shall be in the consummation of the present age." But then, immediately after, he makes the singularly unintelligent observation that the second verse describes a state of things properly and truly after the resurrection. The judgment of the quick is ignored. There is in truth not a word here about the dead raised, or souls giving an account of their deeds, but emphatically and repeatedly of the earth's crisis, and of the world smitten and languishing under God's mighty hand. The language, no

doubt, is excessively strong, and here and there appears to look on to the dissolution of all things, as is sufficiently common in prophetic style, where the prediction of the signal change which ushers in the millennium contains a more or less covert allusion to the utter passing away of the heavens and earth that now are, and the coming in of the eternal state. But the conclusion of the chapter makes it plain that the grand aim of the Spirit here is to portray that mighty and universal catastrophe which is succeeded by the times of refreshing for Israel and the earth, of which God has spoken by His holy prophets since the world began.

So profound and all-embracing however is the dealing of God, that even the angelic hosts escape no more than the proudest potentates here below. “It shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high [not, *that are* on high], and the kings of the earth upon the earth.” These spirits of evil had up to this misled man, dishonoured God, sought to corrupt every mercy almost from the source. But the time is come that angels should be judged as well as living men, far beyond even the judgment of the flood. The power of the heavens shall be shaken—not earth only but also heaven. But far from its being as yet the melting away of time into eternity, “then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” It is the day of which Zechariah spoke (chap. xiv.), long after the return from the captivity, when Jehovah shall be king over all the earth. “In that day shall there be one Jehovah, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses.” Could expressions be used more precisely to exclude the mystical interpretation, or more calculated to maintain the hopes of Israel, then to be built on the Living Stone over which they have till yet stumbled ?

CHAPTER XXV.

THE bearing of chapter xxiv. on the end of the age is entirely confirmed by that which follows and is now before us, where we have the prophet personifying the people raising their hearts to the Lord in praise. They are celebrating God for His wonderful doings, and own that His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. “O Jehovah, thou art my God ; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name ; for thou hast done wonderful things ; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap ; of a defenced city a ruin : a palace of strangers to be no city ; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place ; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud : the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.” (Ver. 1—5.) The execution of His judgment takes effect on the strong and their city. It is the habitable earth which comes under the Lord’s hand, as certainly as the end of the chapter before was His dealing with the heavens and the earth. The eternal state does not enter into account. On the other hand there is no ground for making it bear on present circumstances. It is a new state of things that does not exist now ; for if there is one place in the earth where, less than another, the Lord has the appearance of reigning, it is in that very Jerusalem and Mount Zion. The chosen land of Israel is in the possession of the Turk ; it has been in his hands for hundreds of years, and before that it was the object of contention for the kings of the earth and equally so for the followers of Mahomet ; it has been the great battle-ground between the east and the west ; and up to the present time God has

permitted that the devotees of Mecca should appear to have gained the victory there. Ever since the cross of the Lord God is no longer maintaining the glory of His Son in connection with Mount Zion. The Son of God has been rejected and has died upon the cross. Since then all connection with the world is broken, every link with the Jew is gone, and no man has ever seen the Lord of glory, except the believer.

He was witnessed by the world before, seen of men—not merely of angels. He was displayed before human eyes, God manifest in the flesh. But, when man cast Him out, all acknowledgment of the world as such was terminated. He was no more seen after His resurrection by any unbeliever; none but chosen witnesses were permitted to behold Him. Taken soon after up to heaven, He sits at the right hand of God; and thence He will come to judge the quick and the dead. A great mistake it is to confound the judgment of the quick with the judgment of the dead. Scripture shows that there is a long interval of most remarkable character, which separates the one from the other. Indeed there may be, in a certain sense, a judgment of the quick going on all through the interval of 1000 years. There will be an execution of judgment before the Lord begins to reign, and, when His reign terminates, the judgment of the dead follows.

While the judgment of the dead remains perfectly certain, while it is a truth of God that there is a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, the other truth has not been so generally seen, namely, that the Lord of glory is about to revisit this world and stop the whole course of human affairs, and interpose with judgments upon the guilt of man; not yet upon the dead, which will come afterwards. Before the judgment of the dead, divine judgment will fall upon living men from the highest to the lowest. To this our Lord referred, when He warned his disciples of the days that were coming. Thus Matthew xxiv. xxv., and Luke xvii. xxi. refer, save a part of the last chapter, exclusively to this time and to these circumstances. Some scriptures speak only of the judgment of the dead, others both unfold the portion of the risen saints to enjoy heavenly glory

with Christ and tell how the dead are to be judged according to their works. The believer is saved according to the worth of Christ's work ; he who is judged according to his own works is lost for ever. No child of God, if judged as he deserved, could be saved. For, if judged at all, God must judge after His own justice with no less standard than Christ. We must be as spotless as His Son in order to be fit companions for Him. But on that ground there is an end of all hope : all now turns on this, that Jesus was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification, not our judgment. What is the value in God's sight of the work He has done ? Is it only a *partial* salvation ? or for some believers ? If it be not a full salvation for sinners, yea, for the worst of those who believe, it is not what God commands to us, nor a due and righteous answer to the cross of Christ. And there is the very comfort of the salvation that Christ has effected. It is a *perfect* salvation, it delivers from *all* sins, it places the chief of sinners upon a new ground as Christians, kings, priests, and children of God. Thenceforward our business is to trust and obey Him, labouring for and suffering with Christ and for Christ, as we await His return from heaven, even our Deliverer, Jesus, who will judge His adversaries.

It is plain that there are two classes of men who will appear risen from the dead : I do not say risen at the same time. No scripture says this. It is said that "the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment."* All this is quite true, but not a word about their coming forth at the same time. Other scriptures show that the two resurrections, here shown to be distinct in principle and issue, will not take place simultaneously. Hence, while both might be said to be the rising of the dead, that of the righteous alone is or could be called

* "Damnation," though the effect of judgment, is not the sense of the expression. It is an instance of men giving their own strength to a word and really weakening the passage in result. .

a rising *from* the dead, the rest being left as yet in their graves. From Revelation xx., again, it is plain that a thousand years at least will transpire between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust. Any one reading the Revelation without prejudice could not fail to gather that the righteous dead are raised first to reign with Christ; and then, after the earthly reign, that the rest of the dead are raised, who are judged according to their works, and of them it is said that whosoever was *not* found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. There is not a hint of any who were found written. When God judges according to works, nothing can follow but destruction. Their evil works abound in the books; and the book of life has none of their names in it.

This strongly links itself with what is before us. Here we have the Lord, not hidden in heaven, but appearing from heaven to reign. He is not reigning on the earth now. It is only among idle speculative men (of learning perhaps) where you find any dream so foolish. You are aware that if there was a period, in the history of Christendom, which was particularly dreary as to outward light, it is from Constantine to the Reformation—the dark ages, as they are called. Yet learned men are not wanting who maintain that *this* is the very time when Christ was reigning; that it began in the year 320 and ended 1320! that is, the most unrelieved reign of darkness that Christendom has yet seen! Augustine made this reign begin with Christ and extend all through Christianity. This was bad; the other is worse, though maintained by H. Grotius. Both exercised an enormous influence in the world. The great Dutchman, if consulted in a matter of erudition, would have probably given no inconsiderable help to most men; but when he came to the word of God, he was as much at sea there as St. Peter or St. John would have been in that which was his favourite province. In divine things learning is of no value, except as a drudge, to men of spiritual judgment and lowly, for the meek only has God promised to guide in judgment. The assumption that, because a man is a profound scholar, even if a Christian also, he is a safe expositor of scripture, is mistaken.

Let my reader, if he know it not already, search and see whether there be not a time coming when that Lord who is now in heaven at the right hand of God will leave it to introduce His reign over the earth with the chosen city as His earthly metropolis. Do you ask why there should be such an attraction to that spot? Certainly it has been the scene of sorrow and shame and rivalry between the east and west, and the deepest humiliation of God's ancient people. But let me ask you, even on your ground, where there is a spot on earth so full of grand associations, so connected with all that is dear to the believer? There the Lord of glory came. There He died. It is *His* city, the city of the Great King. Why should He not then come and take it for Himself? Is it not worthy of Him to pardon and bless and sanctify and magnify Jerusalem before the world, overcoming her evil with His good? Most plain is the scripture that the Lord has to come there, and to establish it as the capital of His earthly kingdom. I do not say that the Lord will dwell literally on the earth, but be King over it. Yet scripture says He will plant His foot upon the Mount of Olives. It is only necessary for the truth of His future kingdom to maintain that He will visibly come and smite the earth and establish His kingdom there, and fill the world with the blessed effects of His glory. Scripture shows that He will be present and display Himself; but for how long, to what extent, and how often during that reign, it is not for me at least to pretend to say: for I am not aware that scripture answers those questions. And as there is a special place, so there is a people He will favour most—Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

But what is to become of Christians? Are they and the Jews to be huddled in Jerusalem together, as the old Chiliasists affirmed? Is this the Christian hope? Such an idea is ignorance and monstrous. The Christian is even now in title blessed in the heavenly places. Thence He will reign over the earth. The Jews then gathered and converted will be in their own promised land and city, on which the eyes of the Lord rest continually, for it is the truth of God that He never withdraws a gift, and never repents of a promise. He might repent of

creating man: this was not a promise; it was simply an exertion of His will. But if God chose Israel or the church, He repented of neither, though both have been unfaithful; for He means to bless, He does bless, and, no matter what the difficulty, He will bless for ever. This we have to hold fast: the purpose of God shall stand. Changes in man and the earth may be, but the counsel of God must yet be accomplished. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He gave the land of Israel to their fathers. He gave the promise to make their seed a blessing. He connected His own Son with Israel after the flesh, that, spite of their sin in the cross, in virtue of His grace in the cross, an immovable basis of blessing might be laid, when they shall be raised to such a pinnacle of greatness on the earth as is reserved for no other people here below. When the Lord will come to reign, He will have removed to the Father's house the heavenly people. He will have raised the dead from their grave, and changed the living into the likeness of His own glory. For this all Christians should be looking, as their expectation. When they are caught up thus, then the earth is clear for the Holy Ghost to work among the Jews. The Spirit of God does not operate to two different ends—a heavenly and an earthly—at the same time. But here we find Him at work among the Jews who are not caught up to heaven, as we expect, but to be blessed under the Messiah on the earth.

Our Lord then having first come and removed the Christians, dead and living, to be with Himself above, will then begin to act upon the Jews and prepare them as His people when He reigns. This is what is in question here. The earthly centre of His reign is Mount Zion and Jerusalem. This it is which gives to the reign of David such emphasis in the word of God. He was the chosen type of the Lord, not merely in his humiliation, but also in his glory. He had also to war and put down his enemies, and therefore was called a "man of blood." Our Lord will be first an executor of judgment, though not, as David, allowing anything of his own spirit or will to interfere and spoil the work, but, in the holy authority of God

Himself, in the pouring out of divine wrath and indignation, all will be perfect and dealt with in righteousness. In that day the Lord will convulse the whole universe, punishing "the host of the high ones on high," that is, in the scene that they have defiled, "and the kings of the earth on the earth." The believing Jews of that day will utter this song in evident reference to their experience of the faithfulness of God. They do not address God as Father in the Spirit of adoption, for they are not Christians; they will be believers, but believing Jews. It is gross ignorance to talk of Abel, Enoch, Abraham, David, or Daniel as Christians. They were all saints, but *not* Christians. Not merely was it after Christ came that the disciples were first called Christians, but the place into which believers were then brought by the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit differs essentially. There is hardly a worse error for a believer now; for it alike tells upon the present and the future and the past, merging all the various displays of God's mind in confusion, which blunts the edge of the word, hinders the full blessing and testimony of the church, and mars the glory of God as much as man can.

Now, no doubt, in presence of the cross, and the Holy Ghost being personally on earth, the old distinctions of Jew and Gentile fade before their common ruin in sin and death morally. But when the Lord comes, He will prepare the Jewish people to receive Him according to the prophets; and they will be made the witnesses of His mercies no less than of His glory here below; as now they are the most obstinate enemies of the gospel and of His grace to the Gentiles.

In this song they speak the proper language of Jews. If a Christian were to address God as Jehovah, it is of course in itself true, but it is a very unintelligent mode for a Christian. To us there is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah is the name of God looked at as a governor that maintains His kingdom; whereas Father is that name which first came out in connexion with His beloved Son, and now, by virtue of redemption, is true of us who believe in Him. Hence, as often noticed, the moment that Christ was raised from the

dead, He says, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.) Christ, by His death and resurrection, has brought us into the same place with Himself. This the Lord always had in view when He was here, so that He never addressed God as Jehovah, because the New Testament presents Him in view of Christianity. But the Old Testament shows that the Lord will have a people, and that they will know Him and the Father as Jehovah. This suffices to indicate the difference; and I have made these remarks to show that another class of people are here spoken of, not Christians, but Jews, who recognize God in that title which God gave Himself in relation to Israel of old. When God chose Moses, He bade him go and make Himself known to them as Jehovah, telling them that He was not so known before. Thus was it chosen at the commencement of the public dealings of God with His people, and throughout their national history it was as Jehovah He appeared. It was not that the name did not previously exist, but He never took it before for His recognized title as the God of Israel. It is the prophet who speaks in behalf of Israel; he breaks into the language of praise, and individualizes it in behalf of the people in verse 1. What are the wonderful things? The death and resurrection of Christ? Not a word about either. These are the themes we should speak about. Thus, on the Lord's-day morning, when we come together, what occupies our hearts is the burden of His praise. We have the still more wonderful works of God in Christ and the new creation, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Here Israel are supposed to be occupied with the wonderful things God has wrought for the deliverance of their nation. (Ver. 2, 3.) For God will have interposed and put forth His power to deliver His ancient people in the judgment of their mightiest enemies. They speak of the ruin God has inflicted on all around them. As long as the Jews are unbroken for their sins and indifferent to the truth of God, only bent on making money and serving as the world's bankers, people will be content to use them and let them alone. But from the moment that God calls

the Jew out of his present spiritual, moral degradation, when the dry bones are gathered together, when their hearts turn to the rejected Messiah, all nations will turn against them, and once more rend them, as truly as ever. How do we know this? The Bible delivers the believer from guess-work. People who do not study the prophetic word can only speculate about the future. There can be no certainty for them; to pretend to it would be presumptuous. But when you bow to and believe the Bible, you are entitled through the teaching of God's Spirit to have the certain light of God. It is entirely our own unbelief if we do not enjoy it.

"And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations, He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it." (Ver. 6—8.) The Spirit of God refers to resurrection. So the apostle, in 1 Corinthians xv. 54, applies the beginning of verse 8: "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." The resurrection synchronizes with the deliverance of Israel, which itself will be "life to the dead" for the world. (Rom. xi. 15.) Thus the first great stroke at death will be at this very time. Then man's career will cease, and the Lord Jesus will receive His ancient people, coming with His risen saints, and will swallow up the vail that is spread over all nations. For there is no deliverance wrought in the earth up to that time.

"Jehovah hath spoken it." Why does He say so here? Is it not because He foresaw man would be incredulous? The special mark of the Lord's voice is here, the proud heart of man being well known to Him, and all the delusions of wise and unwise, deceiving and being deceived. He knew how people

would say, when they came to predicted judgments, these are for the Jews: and if to blessings, those are for themselves. They have all the good things for the church; they have left the dark things for Israel: but even there they destroy conscience by the lie which views them as past and obsolete. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust." (Ver. 9—12.)

We must examine of whom God speaks; there are judgments upon Israel and upon Christendom, and blessings for Israel and for the church. That this is for Israel has been already shown; the language used is only suited to them. They speak of themselves, not as we do, as the children of God, but as His people, and of judgments, as introducing their blessing. Were all the earth to be dissolved, it would neither lessen nor increase our blessing. When Christ comes, He will simply remove us to Himself, changed into His likeness, out of the scene of weakness, and sin, and sorrow, into His own heavenly home. Whereas here, "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Ver. 9.) They are not saved yet. Such is not our case now, save as to the body. Search the New Testament and you will see that, as regards the soul, we must be saved now, and if we believe, we are. It is plain that here is another class, Jews who have waited in shame for Jehovah, and who when He comes in glory, say, "This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us." (Ver. 10.) Not for us but for them "shall the hand of Jehovah" rest in "this

mountain." Our portion is in heaven. "This mountain" is the lofty centre of the earthly glory. And, accordingly the name of a proud national foe of Israel follows, as doomed to humiliation. Is the Christian looking for Moab to be trodden down? The wholesale christening of the Jewish prophets tends to make scripture ridiculous, and many a man has become hardened in his infidelity by such wild applications to the Christian church. There are general truths and principles that apply to us; for all prophets are intended for the use of the Christian, as the law also. All scripture is inspired and profitable; but it is absurd thence to infer that all is about ourselves. "The law is lawful," says St. Paul, "if a man use it lawfully;" and so are the prophets; but we must hear them, not as if we were Jews, but Christians.

Here, then, is a plain proof that not Christians, not the church of God, are before us, but Israel. What have we to do with Moab as an enemy? and an enemy which is to be trodden down? Do we look to tread down our enemies, if it were even the Roman papacy? It is scripture, but it is not a scripture prophecy about us; it is what we ought to profit by and to bless God for; but it concerns not ourselves, but Israel. They on the earth will see their former enemies trodden under them, and Moab is one of them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HERE we have another song which is to be sung in the land of Judah. That in the last chapter is not so called, yet was it an outburst of praise after the shaking of heaven and earth; in this we have the people still further celebrating what God has done for Judah.

If we look at Israel now, the contrast with what they are to be made by and by is very striking. For in Romans i. 18, they are thus alluded to: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness [*i.e.*, Gentile wickedness in general] and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness [that of Israel]." Here, on the contrary, it is said, "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may pass in." (Ver. 2.)

The truth will have been abandoned by the Jewish people, or the larger part of them, in the last days. At the first advent of Christ it could be said that "salvation is of the Jews;" they had the truth but held it in unrighteousness. They had the form of sound doctrine maintained for the most part, save among the Sadducees. But before the Lord comes the second time, the great mass of the nation will not hold the truth but a lie, the great deceit of the last days, the lie of Antichrist instead of the truth of Christ. The unrighteousness will be similar.

Here we have the blessed contrast of all this: there is a remnant whom God will make to be a strong nation, and they are called, "The righteous nation which keepeth the truth." (Ver. 2.) In verse 3 it is not merely that there is a general profession of the nation, but there will be individual reality among them. In the past they were called "the holy nation," this was the name that belonged to them, but in the future there is this comfort for our souls that it will be real, and that individually. No common privileges are ever to make us less mindful of our individual need.

For many years the common joy of the church was very little entered into, because of the worldliness, legalism, many divisions and innumerable wrong ways that had crept in. But there is the danger, now that God has been pleased to show the importance of corporate blessing, of our forgetting that the individual place must be still more carefully watched. It is of primary moment to know the standing of the Christian and the position of the church, but *state* must next be looked to. Strength depends upon what passes between our own souls and God, who in His gracious, vigilant care watches over the saints individually. These then do not forget the public blessings of the nation, but there is also the individual saint's walk, staying upon God, caring for His glory, who, on His part, keeps the soul in perfect peace; the mind is stayed upon God Himself. For no matter what the blessings are, if we have not God Himself as the object of our hearts, they are sure to be misused; therefore, it is said, "because he trusteth in thee." It is not merely the perception of the goodness of God and of the wonders He had wrought for them. Now they know *Himself*, and trust *Himself*; and this is a very great thing for our souls—this personal knowledge of God and trust in God. I need not say it is what God looks for now in a still more intimate way than even then, though all that ever has been done on the face of the earth will have been completely eclipsed with but one exception (and this exception is Christ, and we may add His body the church). Nothing can surpass the last Adam; nothing compare with Christ's cross, and that will be our portion, of which we will joy and boast even in glory.

Remark this also that, in all these statements of what they are to share, you never find such language addressed to them as supposes them to enter into the depths of God's ways in the cross as is expected of us now. What can be sweeter than the way in which they count on their deliverance, and confide their souls to God! But you never find such words as, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet nothing would have been more easy, had it been in due keeping, than for God to have said so here. *We* are called into

such fellowship with God about His Son and the cross as well as heaven as nobody can really find in the Old Testament.

When a person starts with the thought that the theme is all one and the same, the distinctive value of scripture is lost. For the soul too the least possible measure of blessing is the result. (Ver. 4.) Here we have the Lord Jehovah brought in; and the reason why they speak of His everlasting strength is, because "He bringeth down them that are on high," &c. (Ver. 5.) It will be one nation whom God in the last days will clothe with such honour, after they have been put down in every way by the Gentiles. Hence they are singing; for not a single difficulty remains then why God should not fully bless them. It is touching to see how God insists that He has done everything that was needed for their deliverance and good. But there is always the abasement of what is high and lofty, referring to Israel themselves. (Ver. 7.) They will have been brought through tremendous trials, and have borne the added and painful reproach of being a most abandoned people.

For a godly few of the Jews will entirely gainsay the lie of Satan when all the power of their nation, and the great mass of the west, will have given way to Antichrist. A little despised remnant will still hold out for the Lord, still refuse him who puts himself forward as the true Messiah. They will have been faithful in the face of death, and now they are made to praise God because "He has weighed the path of the just." (Ver. 7.) It is sweet in thinking of this, that their triumph will not be by their power or their knowledge, but by their simple trust in Jehovah and faith in His word. But a scanty glimpse will be theirs; for they are the very souls referred to, in Isaiah 1., as walking in darkness and having no light. This ought never to be said of a Christian, though he may slip into such a feeling; for he has seen Christ, the light of life, the true light. He may have but a dim perception of Christ, but still Christ is before his soul and always shines; for it is not true, that where the light of grace has once shone, God takes it back again. The difference is on the part of the Christian. It is never the light that is gone; but that he may have been unfaithful and turned

his back upon it. The Holy Ghost has come down to abide with the Christian for ever. He may not always walk according to the light, but in it he is, as a believer, and cannot but be; yea, he *is* now light in the Lord. The Christian walks in the light as long as he professes the name of Christ. He never walks in darkness; he may not *enjoy* the light, but this is another thing.

The contrary language is very common in Christendom, because they confound the position of the Christian with that of the Jewish people, who *must* go through darkness by and by, before their light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon them. Possibly a very few may not be thus walking in darkness; some certainly will have godliness in contrast with the many; they are "the wise." But the beautiful feature of the godly is, that although they thus walk in darkness, yet as they have been touched by the Spirit of God, and know that what is of God can never have alliance with sin, so they will refuse to own that idols and Antichrist can be of God. Thus they pass through the fires, with an uncommonly feeble measure of knowledge of God no doubt, but still they will be true to what they have got, and will be brought out to praise God. (Ver. 7.) They are entitled to be spoken of as "the just." So now, it is a great snare as well as mistake of believers not to take the place of being saints of God; for if they decline it, they feel not responsibility in their walk. So in earthly relations, if persons in the position of masters or servants do not act from their true position, they will never carry themselves in practice as becomes them. To own our proper relationship is not pride, but a duty and wisdom. If you are occupied therein with self, no doubt pride comes in, but it is all right and important to acknowledge God in the relationships to which He has called us.

The Spirit of God leads them to say, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee," &c. (Ver. 8.) That is what they had been wading through. They had waited for Him in the way of His judgments, we follow Him in grace and look to appear with Him in glory. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit

within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Ver. 9.) Now we have the individual again. As far as the world is concerned, the patience of God will have ended in the most fearful departure from the truth. God is now *suffering* the ways of man. He has not left them to their own conjectures or darkness; but He has caused His light to shine in the person of Christ, leaving man to himself, save working by His word and Spirit. Outwardly God seems as though He did not notice what is passing here below, and all this after the full light of God has shone through Christ upon this world. Saving grace has appeared to men. Favour has been shown to the wicked: this is what is going on now. "Let favour be shown unto the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." "In the land of uprightness," it is added, "will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah." The gospel is but for a witness; it will not, cannot govern the world. When God's judgments are here below, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Hence there is another thing: in verse 11 Jehovah, with uplifted hand, is coming in the way of judgment. Does the first answer declare "they will not see?" But, says He, "They shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." (Ver. 11—13.)

And what then about Israel? "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise." (Ver. 14.) This is of course highly figurative language. If we look at the resurrection, we know that the *wicked* are to rise as well as the righteous; that is, there is a resurrection of all men, just and unjust. These Gentile oppressors of Israel must rise in the resurrection of judgment. They will rise like other bad men. Hence when it is said here, "They shall not rise," the Spirit does not describe the literal resurrection of the body, but the complete reversal of the lot of the Gentiles and Israel in this

world. These old lords are no longer to live or rise again in this world. This will suffice to show that the language here is figurative.

In chapter xxv. 8 it is said, "He will swallow up death in victory." This, we know from God Himself, will be realized in the literal resurrection of the body, when the saints are raised. But in chapter xxvi. that allusion to resurrection is employed as a figure, because the context proves that it cannot refer to that literal fact; for if it did, it would be to deny that the unrighteous are to rise. This is the true criterion for the understanding of any passage of the word. If a person bring you a text against what you know to be true, always examine what surrounds it, what God is treating of. Here it is plain that it is a question of the way in which God will deal in that day with the Gentiles who lorded it over Israel. But is it not the fact, some may ask, that these Gentiles were literally dead? Certainly, I answer; but it is not true that they shall not rise. Perhaps this would not be worth dwelling on, were it not that many apply chapter xxvi. to the same literal resurrection as xxv. 8. We must never force but bow to scripture. The passages that do refer to a raising of bodies we must hold fast, but it is dangerous to misapply others which it only uses as a figure, because one might infer, as from our chapter, that some shall never rise. In truth, as we know, all men must rise. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." (John v. 28, 29.) There we have the most decisive proof that all the dead, just and unjust, are to rise and reappear. Here contrariwise the wicked enemies of Israel "shall not rise." John clearly teaches the resurrection of all, good and bad. Isaiah xxvi. 14 refers only to the figure of rising or not to comfort Israel from all fears of their old troublers. "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." (Ver. 14.) But what has been done for the nation? "Thou hast increased the nation, O Jehovah, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto

all the ends of the earth." (Ver. 15.) He does not speak of the resurrection of the body. Clearly when that takes place as described, it could not be said that He had removed the risen saints far unto all the ends of the earth. Take it of Israel, and how true it is!

So, again, verses 16—18. "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Jehovah. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." They will review their past conduct, and see that they have not accomplished the purpose of God. They had brought in no divine flow of blessing; they had learnt the bad ways of the Gentiles, and brought a curse on themselves; the name of the Lord was blasphemed because of them. But now it is said, "Thy dead shall live; my dead body shall they arise." What mighty words, and how tender! The Lord awakens Israel, and even calls them *His* dead body. It is no question of bodily death, but of national revival. The daughter awakes from her long sleep, and the Lord speaks of the Jews (so long defunct as His people) as His dead. They, for their part, own themselves to be just as bad as the rest of the nations, but the difference is that the Lord claims them as His own. "Let them be dead," He says, as it were, "still they are mine." It is the Jewish nation that had been like a corpse whom the Lord is graciously pleased to identify as His dead body, bringing them out again. So Abraham would bury his dead out of his sight. Here God claims them to fill them with a new life. "My dead body shall they arise." Some may think this a questionable interpretation of the passage; but a scripture or two will prove its soundness.

In Ezekiel xxxvii. the terms of the figure are quite as strong as here; the Spirit of God shows the prophet a valley of dry bones. "They were very dry." "Can these bones live?" was the question. (Ver. 3—5.) "Behold I will cause breath to

enter into you." (Ver. 6.) Then the vision is realized, the bones come together. Next there was flesh on them. (Ver. 11.) Then the bones, coming forth and clothed with flesh, answer to the dead men here raised out of their graves. But, beyond controversy, this means the whole house of Israel: "Thy dead shall live," says Isaiah. To put this chapter of Ezekiel along with Isaiah xxvi. makes, to say the least, a strong presumption that if the figure of resurrection is used to show the fresh start of Israel in the one, so it may be in the other. But it is certainly so intended in Ezekiel xxxvii., for, if we have the vision, we have also the inspired interpretation. We are not therefore at liberty to explain the vision according to our own thoughts; the explanation of the Holy Ghost is express and conclusive. Thus we can carry divine light back to Isaiah xxvi., where the very same allusion is found.

In Hosea, again, there is a similar figure, as also in Daniel xii. 2, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." If we divert this to a resurrection of the body, in the first place it is not a resurrection of *all*, but only of *many*. In the second place, it is of some to everlasting life and of some to shame and contempt at the *same time*. We must give up the doctrine of the first resurrection, separated by a thousand years and more from the second death (Rev. xx.), in order to found on this a literal rising from the graves. All is plain and just if it apply in the same way as Ezekiel and Isaiah to the national revival of Israel (or the Jews), whom God will bring out of all their present condition of shame, though some of them be allowed to display fatal wickedness and pride. But the last will be quickened with divine life. This is another confirmation of the truth of the interpretation.

But further the next verse (20) is explicit, where God says, "Enter thou into thy chamber till the indignation be overpast." Those who interpret the context of a literal resurrection are led into the error, that the risen saints (for such this scheme would suppose to be here meant) would be here on earth whilst the divine indignation is going on! One could understand their

holding that some are to pass through the tribulation, though it is not the same thing as the indignation. But it is clearly a question of men alive here below, not of men changed. God tells them (the Jews) to enter into *their* chambers until He has spent all His wrath upon the nations. Is this what we look for? Are we not to be taken out of this earthly scene and to enter into the Father's house above? We are not an earthly but a heavenly people. We know the Lord is coming who will take us to be with Himself where He is, and when He has translated the Christians above, the Jews will be called for the earth. The little remnant will be grievously tried, and the vast body of the nation will receive the Antichrist. Then, when the judgment of the quick comes, it is said, "enter into thy chambers." He will not provide a heavenly abode for them, but they are to enter into *their* chambers, always some place of refuge and earthly security. All this renders plain the right interpretation of the passage, and shows that He is not speaking about the heavenly saints, but refers to the remnant of the Jews in the last days, who are to have a haven of refuge provided for them. It is not like Abraham: this is our place; Israel's will be much more like Lot, for they will be in the midst of the place where the judgment is to be executed. Lot entered into his chambers (that is, Zoar) when the judgments came, but as for Abraham, he was entirely out of the scene; and yet before it came to pass, he knew it far better than Lot. His position, communion, and experience were entirely different from those of his nephew. So we shall be taken to Christ and brought into the Father's house: and afterwards, when the Lord comes to execute judgment, we shall come along with Him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THIS is the closing portion of the series that has been occupying us. It is "in that day." Chapter xxviii. manifestly introduces a new part of the prophecy.

The great crisis is arrived. Not only does Jehovah come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth is compelled to disclose her deeds of blood, and her slain shall be covered no more; but there are yet greater things. For "in that day Jehovah with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." It is the execution of divine judgment on the power of Satan, figuratively set forth under forms suited to describe his hostility as at work against Israel among the Gentiles. (Ver. 1.) "The day of Jehovah" takes in not only the thousand years, but a little more.

Thence the Spirit turns to the Lord's ways with His own. "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I Jehovah do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Ver. 2, 3.) His care never failed, whatever the times that passed over His land and people. When earth comes once more into His view, and consequently Israel, His watchful goodness will prove itself unremitting on their behalf. "Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." There seems not a little obscurity in the language, if one may judge from the discrepancies of expositors, and the difficulty of suggesting such a sense as carries the unbiassed along with it. But assuming that the substantial force is given in the English Bible, the Lord, on the one hand,

challenges the adversaries and warns of their sure destruction ; on the other He proffers His own protection as the only door of peace and safety. The next verse (6) is transparent : "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root : Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." Such is the purpose of the Lord ; and it shall stand.

It was not mere purpose, however : there was patient, persevering discipline in His ways with Israel. "Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him ? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him ? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it : he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin ; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness : there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off : the women come, and set them on fire : for it is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." (Ver. 7—11.) Thus, there was indeed a mighty difference in God's ways with Israel and their enemies. Faithfully did He chastise them in their pride, and rebelliousness, and unbelief ; but it was not with the unsparing judgment which uprooted and destroyed His and their foes. There was slaughter too ; but what was it in comparison of those that Israel are destined to slay before this day of retribution arrives ? In their case, judgment was tempered with mercy ; His dealing was measured. In His debate or controversy with Israel He deigned to plead ; and even when the sorest trial came, there was a gracious mitigation and arrest in favour of Israel ; and not this only, but also moral profit, when every trace of idolatry should be ground like chalkstone to powder. They must not be surprised, then, if in such mighty changes the works of the men of the earth

passed away, the defenced city was desolated, the habitation forsaken and left like the wilderness, only relieved by pasturage for the calf, and by withered, broken firewood for women to come and set on fire; for oh! the folly of the people and the ruin they bring justly, necessarily, on themselves!

Yet here, as elsewhere, great tribulation is the immediate precursor of a greater deliverance. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." (Ver. 12.) The Judge of all the earth shall do right; but He shall interpose in saving and sovereign mercy. He shall sift out and gather the Israelites one by one. Nay more, "it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (Ver. 13.) Those who have accompanied me thus far will have no trouble or doubt in determining the true application. It is the trumpet of Matthew xxiv., not of 1 Thessalonians iv. and 1 Corinthians xv. The latter pair refers to the divine summons to the heavenly saints; our chapter, as well as the passage in the gospel, describes the call to Israel to re-assemble, from north and south, to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS portion, which is intimately connected with chapter xxix., gives us a clear detailed view of the ways of God with His people and His land, more especially with Jerusalem, in the last days. Israel is to fade as a flower, Jerusalem to be in sore displeasure, but delivered gloriously and for ever. I trust it may be seen plainly how impossible it is to apply what the Holy Ghost announces here as a whole, to anything that has yet been accomplished. We must leave room for a further and closer bearing of these woes of the prophet. Now simple as this may be, it is immensely important. For even many Christians are looking onward for the gradual progress (not testimony alone) of the gospel. They expect that, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost upon the preached word, the nations are to be by degrees brought in; moral evil, infidelity, every form of superstition, all the pride and worldliness of man, to be slowly broken down, when the power of the Holy Ghost shall fill men's hearts with righteousness and peace and joy, and thus the world in general be the reflection of the will and ways of God. To such persons the assertion seems strange that there is to be a total change of dispensation; that God, having first taken us away to be with Christ above, is going to restore Israel into pre-eminence in their own land, *not* to convert them simply and bring them into the Christian church, but to lead them to repent and receive their Messiah, when they shall have their own distinctive promises and the new covenant made good to them, Jehovah's glory shining upon Zion, themselves exalted above all nations, who then take a place of conscious willing inferiority to Israel, and vie with one another which shall pay most honour to the chosen of the Lord. All this, in many weighty consequences, involves such a mighty revolution in people's thoughts, that those more accustomed to the word of God can hardly conceive what an immense draft it makes upon the faith of those who are

unversed in the prophetic word ; how repugnant it is to all that is most cherished in their minds, what a death-blow it gives to what they had considered the legitimate hope of the church.

If we come to God's word as the only source of truth and sure test of all previous thoughts, nothing can be plainer ; for here we have clearly a vision of the terrible blow that is to fall upon Ephraim, which is not only the name of a particular tribe, but the general designation of the ten tribes who mustered under that leading tribe. Judah and Ephraim are the two chief titles by which the prophets continually contrast the two houses of Israel. What the prophet communicates here is the woe that is to fall specially on Ephraim, that is, on those we call the ten tribes. This furnishes us with means for judging the time and circumstances of its fulfilment, because no such judgment as is here described ever historically fell upon the Jews. The others (*i.e.*, Israel) were carried away into captivity in Assyria, and were never as a people restored to the land. Isaiah wrote when this dreadful blow was fallen upon Israel, and goes onward to their last days, even to the days when Christ Himself, first in faith, then in delivering power and glory, shall be connected with the remnant of Judah. Looking at the past history of the people, we fail to see any such connection of Christ with Judah, anything that answered to this recourse to the tried Stone, save in those disciples who left the synagogue for the church at a later epoch. The ten tribes were carried away at an early day, and later on the two tribes were carried to Babylon, whence emerged only an inconsiderable remnant of Judah. The prophecy therefore has not yet been accomplished ; and that which has not been must be fulfilled. Surely no canon of interpretation can be surer or plainer than this. Scripture cannot be broken : the word of God must be verified sooner or later. The end of this age is the ripe season for making good the bulk of prophecy. Therefore the one question here is whether anything has occurred really and fully corresponding to these judgments that fell on the ten tribes and Judah with Jerusalem also. That there never has been an adequate accomplishment will be manifest enough as we pass on.

"Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine. Behold, Jehovah hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." I do not think drunkenness is to be taken in its merely literal acceptation. It represents their dreadfully excited, stupified, careless state, given up to their own pleasure and self-indulgence to the shame of the true God. What drunkenness is among men with its frightful natural effects, such in a large moral sense will be the condition of these proud insensate men of Ephraim. Fulfilled at whatever time it may be, plainly it will be in Israel as such.

"In that day shall Jehovah of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for a strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." But was the condition of Judah better? "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." In vain had God met their weakness, and fed them with infants' food. (Ver. 9, 10.) Another dealing is needed and will surely follow. "With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people"—not with that child-like instruction which they had slighted, but with the foreign tones of enemies who would scourge them. They would not have His words of rest for the weary, they must need have a nation they understood not. It was a judgment on their unbelief.

Thus the Assyrian is first represented as a hail-storm coming down from the north on Ephraim, "a mighty and strong one," "as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing." It is the "king of the north," as he is described in Daniel xi. I have already drawn attention

to the mistaken supposition that the lawless one, who is to be manifested as "the king" in Palestine, is the only danger of the Jews. No doubt he, though their king, is at bottom an enemy of the worst character. For what can be more afflicting or disastrous than to have one in your very midst whom you have embraced as a friend, and who turns out the bitterest foe? Such will be the case when the Antichrist appears in the midst of the Jews and reigns, accepted by them as the Messiah. The Antichrist will be in evil and in false pretensions what Christ is in deed and in truth. Though Jesus was God, yet, when He came as man among men, He never asserted His rights as God in His ordinary path here below, however true the glory of His person was to faith. He never used the Godhead to avert trials and sufferings, or man's contempt of Him. He waited on God and trusted in Him. His obedience as man contributed only the more, because of His divine dignity, to show that He was willing to encounter all shame and reproach, yea, the death of the cross, that God the Father might be glorified. Antichrist will, on the contrary, use all that Satan gives him (and Satan will endue him with such energy as never has been possessed before by man upon the earth), will use all power and signs and lying wonders. The consequence will be that the Jews, who have always been looking out for external tokens and prodigies, will accept and worship Him as the Messiah and Jehovah their God in Jerusalem. This is the person the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians warns us is to come. Upon him first of all is the day of the Lord to fall; though that day will take in the whole course of judgments, from its first act in destroying the Antichrist till the end of the thousand years. All this period will be not only for the display of divine glory, but there will be also the execution of judgment from time to time on those that oppose themselves. Thus, of the other enemies of Jehovah, the chief is this very king of the north, the Assyrian scourge that comes down upon Ephraim. Clearly he is an enemy that comes against the Holy Land, whereas Antichrist will reign in the land, being there received by the Jews, and probably a Jew himself; for otherwise he could hardly hope to pass himself as

Messiah. But the other external enemy, though he may set up to understand dark sentences (Dan. viii.), will rather appear antagonistically, as a fierce king and mighty man of craft.

From chapters xxviii., xxix., we hear of two attacks on Jerusalem. First of all the enemy comes on Ephraim, entering the Holy Land from the north, on which occasion he has it his own way. He humbles the pride of Ephraim (ver. 3), and is allowed of God to gain a partial success over Jerusalem also, "Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye *scornful* men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." Was this the case in past history? Supposing you look at Sennacherib and his army (2 Kings xviii.), what is there like it, save as a preparatory type? Was not his power completely humbled before the Jews? (Chap. xix.) Was it not a godly son of David who then reigned at Jerusalem? Had not Ephraim been swept off years before? It is manifest and certain that Sennacherib never gained an advantage over Jerusalem, whereas this power is to be victorious in the first instance, and even in the second to reduce them to the utmost. Mark the language of the prophet here, "Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye *scornful* men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem." (Ver. 14.) The fact is, when Sennacherib came against Jerusalem then, the pious king Hezekiah ruled there, who, instead of making a covenant with death, implored the help of Jehovah against the scornful

king of Assyria. The result was that the angel of Jehovah smote the host of Assyria, so that there fell no less than 185,000. Save that the Assyrian will once more oppose the Jews, there is scarce a feature in the past which is not the reverse of what we have here.

Let rationalists, if they will, conclude that the book (for the Spirit of God they deny) has made a mistake; believers may be assured that it mainly looks onward to the judgments of the last days. Indolent readers, unintelligent or prejudiced commentators, may slur over the distinctive points of the prophecy, turning what they can to moral profit. But if a man follows out the matter closely, he must accept the truth of the future, or become a rationalist, that is, an infidel. It is perfectly certain that nothing which approaches the prediction has yet occurred. Therefore the only legitimate inference to be drawn from it is either that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, or that the pseudo-prophet was guilty of a lie or a flourish. The Christian believes on the contrary, that God has written nothing in vain, and that every word, not yet accomplished, must be fulfilled to the letter; among the rest this wonderful dealing in which God is to make the land of Israel the grave of man's pride and power.

Then God will appear for the everlasting deliverance of poor Israel. And that very people, now so proverbial for their obstinate rejection of Christ, will go forth zealously spreading the tidings of divine mercy to the ends of the earth. What an evident contrast with that which exists now! Israel will be brought into their own land and blessed there, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion. *Now* God has no land that is more particularly holy. The Land, holy in His purpose, is the possession of the Turk. It is still largely a barren land, though proofs of fertility are not wanting in the midst of barrenness. How is so vast a change to be brought about? When consummated, God will lead Israel to build a magnificent temple. The priests, the sons of Zadok, shall minister in due order. The land shall be divided among the twelve tribes after a new fashion. This and more we know from the last chapter

of the prophet Ezekiel. Indeed abundant proofs are manifest elsewhere to any person moderately acquainted with the prophecies. At the present time the characteristic facts are— Israel rejected, the Gentiles called, the church formed in union with Christ on high and by the Holy Ghost here below, in which church is neither Jew nor Gentile. Thus the character of blessing for man is entirely altered. Instead of outward honour resting upon the Jews, they are cast out and dispersed, and have yet to pass through a fiery tribulation at the close. We are God's people, God's children now, not they. Peace in Christ is ours, but in the world we have tribulation. In the days that are coming all will be changed: God, instead of rejecting the Jews, will again choose them to stand forth in their own land, converting them to Himself, quenching all tendency to rest on ordinances, and taking idols for ever away; whereas they formerly mixed up idols with the worship of Jehovah, and rejected Christ. Plainly therefore a new state of things must have come in. The prophecies may take us down to the change; but how is the change itself to be brought about? By more tremendous judgments on Israel, and especially on their enemies, than the world has ever witnessed; not only a great nation, but the east and west, their old enemies, represented in their descendants. All nations of the earth, in short, will have their representatives there and then. The result will be, that God will judge all the nations, at length blessing His ancient people, according to the promises He had ensured to the fathers, then accomplished to the children. In order to bring about this change, not only must there be an execution of judgment, but also the removal of the heavenly saints to be with Jehovah above; for as long as the church goes on here below, it is impossible, morally speaking, that God could accomplish these events of a wholly contrasted character. For it is contrary to all analogy that God would act upon two opposite principles at the same time. For instance, how could God both give and withhold outward honour for a Jew? How form the church at the same time that He restores and owns Israel? If a Jew were to believe now, he, baptized by the Holy Ghost, becomes a member of Christ's

body; whereas what we find in the prophets is, that a godly Jew, in the last days, remains a Jew. The Lord will quicken his soul, no doubt; but he will be found in his own land, and, instead of suffering, he will be blessed in earthly things. Thus it is an altogether different state of things. To this the New Testament supplies the key. Before Jehovah begins thus to work in Israel, He removes the church to heaven.

Hence in the Revelation the great first lesson is this, that when "the things that are" or the seven churches terminate, and those that are true believers now are seen glorified with the Lord in heaven, then (Rev. vii.) God takes up a new work among the Jews and the Gentiles, who will be, both of them, blessed, but even so distinct from each other. No doubt the Jews will return to their land in unbelief, and Satan will get them to install a man as their Messiah, who will draw them by degrees to worship himself and an idol. Some might think it strange to assert, that these civilized Christianized nations which count it impossible that the educated could worship idols or the Antichrist should fall into that very snare. But scripture is explicit, that it is those who now boast of progress, knowledge, and religion who will at that time fall into the anti-Christian pit and idolatry. All Western Europe will be drawn into the snare with the mass of the Jews. God will have previously removed all properly called Christians. Then the apostacy will take place, though in the midst of this fearful evil the Spirit of God will work specially among certain of the Jews, who will go through this scene faithful to God, some being killed for the truth, and others surviving in the flesh—a remnant God will reserve to Himself to make of it as it were a new Israel. He will come in the midst of this wickedness; He will execute judgment upon the ungodly, preserving the spared remnant who will become the chosen means of spreading the truth throughout the millennial age.

When the Holy Ghost says, "Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death" (ver. 15), we are not to suppose that this is to be taken as if they confessed it. God is rather exposing their true evil and danger. They may boast of their

covenant, but they do not know it is with hell. They are deceived to accept a false Messiah, whose power will turn out to be of Satan, but they are ignorant of the cheat. Men would not openly say that they had entered into a contract with the devil: one must be in an extraordinary state in order to own such a thing. Nor does the word of God at all limit us to such an interpretation. I suppose the reference is to those that enter into a covenant to save themselves from the king of the north. It appears to be a contract entered into between the false prophet and the beast. The power that scripture designates as the Beast is the emperor of the west, the last Roman ruler when that empire re-appears. There is a living man even now, who has his mind set upon some such scheme: it is a notable fact, that within the last few years the project has entered into the brain of one who has proved that an idea governs him. Nor is it absolutely new, this yearning after the reorganization of the empire, with Rome for its capital. The plan is not to overthrow other European nations, but to make them subject kingdoms, each having its king, under one supreme head. That this is the theory of a living monarch, there can be no more question than that it was the idea of another before him. I may add, that he, too, like his predecessor, meddled with the affairs of the Holy Land, and that both have sought a hold of Rome. Some of us have held these interpretations of the prophecies long before the war of the holy places or the possession of Rome. They were thoughts derived not from political events but from scripture. Plainly then a great power shall arise, in scripture called "the Beast," or the revived Roman empire, with this peculiar form, that instead of putting aside the various kings of Europe, it will allow of separate kingdoms under him, nominally independent, but really dictated to by the emperor, who accordingly is the contracting party with the apostate Jews, in concert with their king the Antichrist; the emperor of the west being the political head, as the prophet king will be the spiritual head of Christendom (then properly anti-Christendom). Thus Jerusalem, which has been the cradle of professing Christendom, will be its grave. As to the par-

ticular person who will effect all this one says nothing. He shall be revealed in his own time. The great point is the manifestation of the chiefs at Jerusalem and Rome. Rome will be the centre of an earthly empire, with separate but dependent kings in western Europe, each having their kingdom subject to the one head. This is one feature. The other is, that the Jews will be in their own land, and that this will bring them into the hands not of Christ but of Antichrist.

When the Jews are there, the rest of the great drama will follow; they will soon have its predicted leader. Then comes the scene spoken of here. (Ver. 14, 15.) In order to strengthen themselves against the great northern oppressor, or the overflowing scourge, they enter into a covenant with the "Beast." In vain do they think to escape. At this very time God will raise to Himself the hearts of a little band of faithful Jews, who will feel assured that the wicked prince cannot be their Messiah; that the true God is a holy God; that His servant, their promised King, must be, not a man of sin, but a man of righteousness. The false Messiah they refuse, their hearts in penitence cry, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah. These are here individually spoken of as "he that believeth." (Ver. 16.) The rest plot, make preparations, and hope to be saved from the overflowing scourge. But no; God will permit the mass to be trodden down. (Ver. 17—20.) They shall in no wise escape. The first attack upon Jerusalem is to be successful. In the next chapter we see a very different result, when the people in the city have been purged and Jehovah interferes. (Comp. Zech. xii.—xiv.)

Thus Jerusalem is the great battle-field of the nations, and the main platform of the judgments of God. I am not speaking now about the last eternal judgment—the great white throne—for this has nothing to do with the earth. Heaven and earth will have fled away before that. Remember there is to be a judgment of the habitable earth, not only a judgment of the dead but also and previously of the quick. Every baptized man professes that Christ is coming to judge the quick and the dead. How many understand and believe it? All will not

take place at the same time. The judgment of the quick we speak of here. The reason why Jerusalem becomes the scene of God's judgments on the nations is that Jerusalem, Judah, and the people of Israel are the chosen centre of God among the nations. In the latter day He will resume His former relations with Israel, though on a better and everlasting ground.

What solemn words in verses 14—29 for the scornful men ruling in Jerusalem! In vain to plead past favour or present privileges. Jehovah should rise up to do His work, His strange work, and accomplish His act, His strange act. He loves not vengeance but mercy. But mockers are odious: most of all in Zion. A consumption therefore is determined upon the whole earth. He is the same unchanging God: let them not presume because of His long-suffering. Even with man it is not always ploughing, nor always sowing-time. Threshing comes at last, and in divers modes and measures. So will it be in God's judgment of the earth. "This also cometh from Jehovah of hosts, which is wonderful in counsels and excellent in working."

CHAPTER XXIX.

As the present chapter was to some extent anticipated in the remarks on the preceding one, one may speak the more briefly now. It opens with the final siege of Jerusalem by "the Assyrian," so familiar in the prophecies. "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow; and it shall be unto me as Ariel." By Ariel, the lion of God, is meant Jerusalem, which the proud stranger menaces with destruction. Spite of great names and associations of the past, it is actually brought down into deep distress. Delay should not hinder its humiliation. Feasts or sacrifices should not avert the storm. God's indignation is in question, and not yet ended: still it abides to Him as Ariel, His lion. "And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." That is, agony of terror would produce effects similar to the tone or language affected by those who dealt with spirits. "But the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." (Ver. 1—6.)

It must be plain, I think, how entirely all this falls in with and confirms the reference to the great king of the north in the time of the end. Sennacherib was but a type. Hence the commentators, not seeing this, stumble in hopeless perplexity. Some, applying it to the typical enemy, cannot get over the

fact that Isaiah himself expressly predicts (as was the fact, of course) that Sennacherib should *not* come into the city of Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. (Chap. xxxvii. 33.) Others, again, suppose the Roman siege to be intended; but this, it is evident, is still more flatly contradicted by Jehovah's intervention at the last gasp to the deliverance of Jerusalem and the utter overthrow of their enemies. In fact it is the future siege at the close of this age, when the great confederacy of the north-eastern nations shall be broken after a previous success against the Jews. The reader can compare Zechariah xii.—xiv., which bear on the same events; also Psalms lxxxiii., cx. 2, 6; Micah iv. 11, v. 4—15. The next verses, 7, 8, strengthen this conclusion: "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations, that fight against mount Zion." Calvin's notion that they were the various garrisons which the Jews brought in from elsewhere to defend their capital, and that they are threatened with being useless refuse, is quite unworthy of his reputation. It is a clear prediction of the destruction of their foes at the last, led on by him who was prefigured by the Assyrian. They shall be as disappointed of their prey, as a hungry or thirsty man who wakes up from his imaginary feast.

The prophet then turns (ver. 9—12) to describe the moral condition of the Jews themselves: for such a trial as God thus brought on them will have its ground in their evil state, whatever may be His mercy and its rejoicing against judgment in the end. "Stay yourselves, and wonder: cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine: they stagger, but not with strong drink. For Jehovah hath poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets

and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." Israel were spiritually blind to God's lessons. Judicial sleep oppressed all: learned or simple made no difference.

Alas! they were formalists, hypocrites, taught by the precept of men as certainly as they avowed their ignorance of God's word. Therefore by God's sentence their wisdom should perish. (Ver. 13, 14.) In vain their efforts to hide from Jehovah or be independent of Him. God, after all, remains God, and man is but as clay in the hand of the potter. (Ver. 15, 16.) If this is solemnly true, it is full of blessed comfort. For "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off, that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought." (Ver. 17—21.) Soon all will be reversed: not only the lofty Assyrian abased and humbled, Israel exalted, but the culpable insensibility of the people gives places to spiritual understanding and earnestness. Sweet traits of the Spirit should find increase of blessing and joy: violence, scorn, and iniquity be judged and vanish. "Therefore thus saith Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." (Ver. 22—24.)

CHAPTERS XXX., XXXI.

THERE is a topic on which the Spirit of God enlarges much here which has been scantily noticed hitherto. Inasmuch as it comes before us in the first of these chapters, I will say a few words on it—the moral condition of Israel, as proved and brought home to them by the revelation of God. For what we have all throughout this section is not merely deliverance, nor this in His grace only, during a time of ruin, but also the righteous Lord proving that He loves righteousness. There was a cause for the proof that the condition of Israel was morally unbearable to God. Blindness was there, religious and finally judicial blindness. This is traced by the Spirit in a variety of ways. We will look briefly at what we have before us here.

The first feature of their evil which draws out the indignation of God, is that His people should go down into Egypt; that a people blessed of God, with promises of still better blessings than ever they tasted, with which they are yet to be blessed by God's own grace in the last days—the best possible blessings for a people upon earth—that such a people should go down into Egypt for help, was not only debasing to themselves, but also peculiarly dishonouring to God. Hence the Holy Ghost now, having shown us their deliverance, goes back and indicates from what they were delivered. God brings out one character of evil after another, and shows that the necessary issue of it was destruction. Yet He brings them out of all their distresses, and at length blesses them fully as His own people. It is peculiarly comforting to read of the ways of God, how He is not only a deliverer from dangers, from outward enemies, from Satan, but also from every form of sin. He does not in any wise gloss over moral evil, but chapter after chapter brings it out, though, as the effect of its judgment, Israel seemed ready to be swallowed up. But as the dark side thus appears, so on the other God is seen interfering in grace, plucking their feet out of the net, setting

the dispersed in their own land, and securing the triumph of His own grace as well as righteousness. For this cause He says (ver. 1), "Woe to the rebellious children, that take counsel but not of me." It is a solemn thing to read such words as these, and still more so to think how applicable they may be to ourselves. Even as children of God, the proneness of our hearts is to act according to our own judgments, for the flesh in the Christian is not a whit better than in any other man. Whenever there is a listening to ourselves, we may be sure there is the same character of evil at work that the Spirit of Jehovah was rebuking in Israel.

What to Israel was going down into Egypt is to us the taking counsel of natural wisdom in any difficulty; that is to say, it was fleshly wisdom which Israel sought, and of which Egypt is the symbol in the ancient world. There was no country in the early history of men so distinguished for the wisdom of nature as Egypt. In later days Greece and Rome sprang up, but that was long after the time to which this vision applied as an historical fact. They were at first little more than a number of barbarous hordes. There was no wisdom found anywhere to the same extent as in Egypt. The great Assyrian who invaded Israel was characterized not so much by wisdom as by vast resources, and appliances in the way of strength. Egypt depended mainly on good counsel, as if there were no wise God—on the counsel of man sharpened by long experience, for it was one of the oldest powers that attained eminence. Accordingly, as they had been versed in the state-craft of the ancient world, they had an immense reputation for their knowledge of means of dealing with national difficulties, peace, plenty, &c.

Israel, when threatened by the Assyrian, sought the help of Egypt: I am speaking now of the literal fact when this prophecy first applied. Though it did bear on the days of Isaiah, yet the character of the prophecy shows that it cannot be limited to that time: only a very small part was accomplished then. But between the two terms of Israel's past and future unfaithfulness, seeking to the wisdom of the world in their

troubles, there is a serious lesson for us in the pressure of any trial that concerns the testimony of God ; there is an immense tendency to meet a worldly trial in a worldly way. That you cannot meet the world's efforts against you by spiritual means is what one is apt to think ; so there is the danger of recourse to earthly means for the purpose of escape. What is this but the same thing that we find here ? And yet who that feels for the children of God and for the truth, but knows the danger of this ? I am sure if we do not feel the danger, it is because we are ourselves under the world's influence. The feeling of the danger, the dread of our own spirits, the fear lest we should meet flesh by flesh, is what God uses to make us look to Himself. God will never put His seal on self-dependence ; on the contrary, the great lesson the whole life of Christ teaches is the very reverse. He lived by the Father ; so " he that eateth Him shall live by Him." That is to say, it is in dependence upon another, even Christ, that the joy and strength and wisdom of the Christian are found. This we gather before the difficulty comes. Then "I can do all things through Him who strengtheneth me."

Where we often fail is through acting from impulse. If we think to plan, instead of praying in real subjection to God, we need to fear for ourselves. Is it not an outrage upon the God that has opened His ear to us ? And yet who does not know that this is the very thing to which perhaps, more than any other, we are prone ?

In this way I take it, that the moral lesson of this chapter is to be seen ;—it is taking counsel, but not of the Lord. Hence (ver. 1—7) God caused the land of Egypt to become the means of deeply aggravating their evil. If we examine the New Testament for our guidance in these difficulties we shall find just the same truth. If the apostle is speaking merely about the ordinary tribulations, we have the very same lesson in other words. Thus he tells us we are to let our moderation be known unto all men, the Lord being at hand : that instead of caring or being anxious about anything (not that we are to be careless, but not to be careful in the sense of anxiety), our requests should be made known unto God with thanksgiving.

Our strength, it is said here, is to sit still ; we have a right to expect our God to appear for us, He has entitled us to expect it. We may be perfectly sure, it matters not what the circumstances are, even supposing there has been something to judge in ourselves, if I tell it out to God, will not He listen ? He cannot deny Himself. He must deny him that bears the name of Christ. Where He now puts to shame, it is an erring child of God ; but so far from His putting such to shame being a proof that He does not love them, it is precisely the proof that He does. But at the same time, let men venture to go beyond what God sees good for the discipline of His child, He soon takes up the rod ; and there can be nothing more terrible than when the adversary exceeds the chastening that is just, gratifying his own hatred to them. For God will rise up in His indignation, and deal with them according to His own majesty ; even the grace of the Gospel does not set aside that. For instance, see the Second Epistle to Timothy. If persons bearing the name of Christ are carried away by their fleshly zeal, and fight against the truth of God or those charged with the proclamation of that truth, God may use them for dealing with faults in His people. God knows how to bring down His people where their looks are high because of anything in themselves, or that grace has conferred upon them. But when the limit of right rebuke is exceeded, woe be to those that fight against them, covering their own vindictiveness or envy under God's name. It is evident that the very grace of the gospel makes it to be so much the more conspicuous ; for it sounds so much the more tremendous that God should thus deal in the midst of all that speaks so loudly of His love.

The Gospels also bring out, in the words of our Lord Himself, the wickedness of fighting against what God is doing even by poor weak disciples. This is the great lesson for us ; we are not to consult our own heart or have recourse to the strength of man. When we flee to the various resources of the flesh, we slip out of our proper Christian path. Whereas the strength of God has indeed shone in that foundation pattern in which all the blessing of grace to sinners is contained ; and it always

takes this form for a Christian, and that is, death and resurrection. There will, apparently, be a great pressure of trial; there will be an apparent sinking down under it; but as surely as there is the semblance of death, there will be the reality of resurrection by and by. Let no one be disheartened. The cross is the right channel of the blessing for the children of God. When we were brought to God, it was just after the same sort. We knew what it was to have the horrors of the conviction of sin, for God was going to bring us for the first time into a place of special blessing. It has always been so. We find it in the case of Abraham, and in proportion to the greatness of blessing is the force of sorrow that precedes it. Isaac was given when Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah as good as dead. There was death, as it were, and he had to wait for a son. Even after the birth and growth of the child of promise, he had to surrender him, to offer up his only son to God. Directly that the singleness and truth of his heart was proved, and that the sacrifice was in principle offered up, the angel of the Lord arrests his hand. How much sweeter now, when Isaac was, as it were, the child of resurrection! And so it is with all our blessings, it matters not what they may be. There must be the breaking down of our feelings, the crucifixion of self in a practical way, if we are to know what God is in blessing: our blessings must be cast in the mould of death and resurrection.

The way by which come all our blessings, is in Him who is dead and risen. To be blessed practically we must morally go through the same process. There must be the frustration of all natural hopes, the blasting of all the objects we desire. When God visits us in His faithfulness with trial, the first thing man seeks is to escape. Israel goes down into Egypt, instead of sitting still in the confidence that God is the highest wisdom and only power. They go down to the land of human wisdom and ability. Were there no God, were they not His people, it would have been intelligible; but as it is, what folly? Yet is it the folly of our own hearts. Are we not conscious of it? Beware lest it be, because we are so accustomed to act thus, that we do

not realize the humbling truth. We need to consider it more deeply to profit by this lesson. Their strength is to sit still instead of hurrying down into Egypt. "For ever and ever" (ver. 8) it was to be noted in a book that they were "children that will not hear the law of Jehovah." (Ver. 9.) That was even the worst of all; rebellion could be forgiven, lying children could be made ashamed of their lies. "Prophesy not unto us right things" (ver. 10), that is, things according to God. We are not to suppose that they actually said these words. We often read in the Gospels, that Jesus answered in many cases where not a single question was put to Him. Why does the Spirit of God say Jesus answered, when He was not asked? Because He knew the thoughts of their hearts. He answered not what they said, for they said nothing; but what He knew they would say if they dared, what He knew was at work within. So here, they may not say it in so many words, but it is what God saw and knew to be the truth of what they were feeling and doing. They did not like the truth which brought before them their rebellion and lies; they endeavoured to get out of the way and reach of the truth. This is precisely what showed it. "Why not use the best resources of men, now that God did not work miracles for them?" This was, in truth, what God had called out Israel for—to be the manifestation of a people whose strength was in Jehovah; to be the witness of how blessed it is thus nationally to trust the living God, in all their public dealings, in their domestic life. All was to be regulated by the law of Jehovah (which is the technical term for the Old Testament). They were to be the practical exemplification of the blessedness of such a people and land. To go down into Egypt was to give up God for man: if they had asked counsel, they well knew God would never send them down to Egypt, out of which He had brought them. But they do not seek counsel, they act before they ask; they may have then prayed about it. But what is it to pray for God to bless what we are doing in self-will? Let us ask Him what He would have us to do before we act. It may be that God would have us do nothing, or possibly give us counsel through one

of His children. For God does not intend us to be so many independent lines. He works by one another; He purposed to make us feel that we are members one of another; but whatever may be the value of any one's counsel, each must be responsible to God. The danger is of putting another in the place of God. Men do not value a man more for this, because when we are self-willed and our counsellor firm for good, the speedy consequence will be that he who stood in the place of God one day, may be almost in the place of the devil the next. This is the flesh—apt to deify the creature one day, and to demonize it the next.

What we have to seek then is to look up to God; and this is just what is here the first word, "the sitting still." But there was more besides. In the chapter before, the point was the word of God, which the flesh treated as a sealed book; but God must be waited on as well as His word. He never intended scripture to be taken apart from Himself; over and above the Bible is God Himself. Not that God can ever be against His word, but He is the only power of entering into the application of it. For the Bible is not only for me to look down into; I must look up to God. I am not intended to read it merely as a book of true stories or good sermons, but as the voice of the living God to my soul. When one reads it thus, in subjection to Him, the relation and attitude of the soul is totally changed; you are delivered from the danger of bending the word of God to your own mind and will. Whereas, when the word leads you out in prayer to God, then it is neither the word without prayer, nor prayer without the word, both of which are exceedingly dangerous, one leading to fanaticism, as the other does to rationalism. Hence, says the apostle, "*I commend you to God and to the word of his grace,*" We need to look up to God that we may gather profit from His word, and to look back to Him from His word that we may with simplicity and faithfulness carry it out. Here Israel had failed, as we see in chapter xxix. So now in chapter xxx., they flee down to the nearest neighbour that could help by human prudence, slighting God's wisdom and the grace which entitled them to cast themselves on Him for it.

"Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit." (Ver. 12—14.) Such was Egypt. The flesh is habitually fraudulent and perverse. But God judges it in His own. It is ever restless and pretends to something. It may look imposing, but it is ready to crumble from top to bottom, and is doomed of God. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift. [Egypt's resources of common sense]; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift." (Ver. 15, 16.) God would make them a signal example, and show that the resources they trusted were only so many nets in which they were to be snared. Had they sought to flee? They should flee in terror. Had they sought help in swift escape? Swift should be the vengeance of their foes. God constantly makes the earthly object to be the rod for the fool's back.

What is the answer of the Lord when He comes to this? Nothing can be stronger than His condemnation. But if He deals sternly with His faulty people here, is it not always for blessing in the end? If He exposes His children, pulls them down from the seat of pride, brings them into trouble from those they prefer to Himself in some extremity, it is the Lord acting in His great grace. To return to Him even with broken bones is blessed. How magnificent is the burst of the prophet! "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted [not to cut off Israel, but] that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no

more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry: when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though Jehovah give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (Ver. 18—21.) He had let all this trouble fall upon His people; He had Himself waited and been exalted; and why? That He might be gracious. The enemy might prove his malice, and they their weak and guilty preference of flesh to Himself, and He allowed it all to take place that He might have nothing to do but to take them out of the pit into which they had fallen, and bless them as they had never been blessed before, at length without hindrance to the outflow of all His love. He waits for them, and though He seem to tarry, it is to bless them with a still greater blessing. (Ver. 19—22.) They should be morally restored, too, and take vengeance on what had seduced their hearts in previous times. "Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold; thou shalt cast them away as a menstrual cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence." (Ver. 22.)

Outward happiness follows, and inward blessing and glory from above.

"Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of water in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." (Ver. 23—26.)

Such is the deliverance which God will work for Israel ; but what about the Assyrian ? Israel are blessed, but not yet the Assyrian judged ; Israel had been wrong, but the Assyrian had been merciless. God had dealt with Israel ; now He must deal with their foes, as we are told in Isaiah x. "When the Lord hath performed His whole work on mount Zion," then will He bring down the Assyrian. (Ver. 27, 28.) The foe will not know that it is God who is guiding them to the Holy Land, but think they are going to have the land and the people an easy prey ; God, on the contrary, is going to meet them there, and avenge His people. (Ver. 29.) This is even more than there had been when Egypt was judged ; Israel could then *eat* the lamb, but with bitter herbs. Not so in the day which is coming ; it is not that part of the passover that this is compared to, but the song of their holy festival. (Ver. 30.) It is not a mere providential judgment—God from a distance acting and merely raising up one people to destroy another. The intervention of God shall be manifested. There is to be a display of divine judgment. (Ver. 30—32.) It is the staff of God's correction, which shall deal to the bitter end with the Assyrian. For Israel such joy and gladness shall follow as never had been tasted heretofore. So manifestly is God espousing their cause, that it will be with the loftiest music of praise and every sign of confidence in God. Has this ever, since Isaiah, been accomplished in Palestine ? Was it heard there even at the time of Sennacherib ? Israel was already in captivity, and Judah was soon swept away by the king of Babylon. Here we have triumph, peace, blessing, and glory. The mighty power of God will have destroyed their enemies for ever. There must then be a fuller accomplishment than the prophecy has yet received.

But it is not to be a mere devastation. (Ver. 33.) Tophet is ordained ; this shows clearly when and how it will be. Tophet is the figure of the judgment on God's part that is coming. It should be "for the king also," not "yea, for the king." That little change has done much mischief in confounding two important personages. I do not deny that the word translated *yea* may apparently be rightly so in certain cases ; but the natural

meaning of it is either *and* or *also*, and this is just what is meant here. The declaration is, that Tophet is ordained not for "the Assyrian" only but also for "the king." The king and the Assyrian are so totally different and opposed that it was needful to reveal the same doom for both. The mistranslation was because our translators did not know the difference, but fancied the king and the Assyrian one and the same. "The king" is that false Messiah who will be found with the Jews in the last days. Received in his own name, he will be accepted as the true Anointed, but he is the devil's Messiah. And the consequence is that hell-fire or Tophet is prepared for him. The point is that God will prepare the same fire for both of them; not only for the Assyrian, but for the leader of Israel's wickedness, "the king." For him the fire of Tophet is prepared as well as for his enemy, the Assyrian. God in this marvellous manner will cast him direct into hell, not waiting for the day of judgment, even before the devil himself. Lest we might think that he is the only one, it is said, "for the king also;" the other personage, who will reign over the Jews, will also be singled out of God to be dealt with in the same way. Figurative expressions are used, but the figures of a terrible reality.

The chapter that follows (xxxi.) is a brief moral comment, and compressed rehearsal of chapter xxx. How touchingly the prophet warns of the danger of Egypt as defection from Jehovah. "Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words [which Israel vainly would escape], but will arise against the house of the evildoers [Israelitish or not] and against the help of them that work iniquity." Jehovah's protection over the righteous would be proved in the day when He judged the helpers and the holpen. From Zion, not heaven only, He will deal. "For thus hath Jehovah spoken unto me, like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall Jehovah of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the line thereof. As birds flying, so will Jehovah of

hosts defend Jerusalem : defending also he will deliver it ; and passing over he will preserve it. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man ; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him ; but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." The commentators naturally are perplexed who look not beyond Sennacherib, for though his host was smitten by the angel of Jehovah, and this might in some measure meet the prediction, there are strong expressions which can never be satisfied, short of the great enemy at the close. Then only will be felt the force of Tophet; then only will be seen the ensign of the Divine presence and power which protects Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE whole work being now finished at Jerusalem, Jehovah is then shown us reigning, for He and no other is the personage spoken of here. "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness," &c. This is a totally different state of things from what prevails at present; for it is grace that now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, not (so to speak) righteousness through glory in the government of the world. In the day that this chapter contemplates, the Lord Jesus will righteously take in hand the sceptre of the earth, and especially of the land of Israel. All the nations will come indirectly under His reign, because there will be one king over all the earth, not to the setting aside of others, as we know, but one supreme central government maintained. Other kings will be obliged to submit to the sway of the Lord, which will continue throughout the whole unbroken period of the millennium. It is called, therefore, "the everlasting kingdom," not being transferred to another, and lasting as long as the earth endures. At the end of the thousand years there will be an awful proof of man's radically unchanged condition, for the nations will then gather together against "the beloved city," the earthly Jerusalem, compassing about the camp of saints. This will be allowed for the express purpose of proving the solemn truth that glory no more ameliorates the heart than does the present longsuffering patience of God. If judgment against evil works is not executed, men's hearts are hardened in wickedness; when God's judgments are in the earth, the world will learn righteousness, but alas! the lesson is soon forgotten.

Jehovah will reign in righteousness, and there will be the exercise then of beneficent government all through His day; but it will be proved once more that the heart is no more changed thereby than under the gospel now, unless received in conscience by the power of the Spirit. There must be the

possession of a new nature. Man must be born again to see or enter the kingdom of God. It will then be evident that the new birth is requisite not merely for the heavenly part, but even for the earthly things of that kingdom. (John iii.) It is in reference to the earthly part that we hear of a king reigning in righteousness. Revelation xx. shows the total failure of this display of glory to make the heart of man one whit better. In a higher point of view, far from failure, there will be during this time an amazing exhibition of that which will bring praise to God Himself, and to this we have a reference here. And what a proof of the selfishness of our hearts, that we do not think much about this blessed time that is coming! Not that it is not believed in; but God give us to think yet more not only of a world set free, but what it is to see Christ where He is in heavenly blessedness. It is blind too. For, to love, what is so much our own portion as His? Besides we are too apt to slight the deliverance of creation, now travailing in pain, during the thousand years, and this because we are so little identified with the interests of Christ. Whatever glorifies Him ought to be very dear to us. Again we shall be connected with the earth, though our *home* will be heavenly. We shall indeed reign with Christ over it. God will make the risen saints to be the intermediary vessels of His glory, and the fruitful channels of His goodness in that bright day. Does it not then show the insensate selfishness of the heart that we are so little filled with the thoughts and feelings suitable to such expectations? It is freely granted that there is a far sweeter hope, even to be with Christ Himself in the Father's house. To see His glory there is more blessed than any inheritance we shall share anywhere. But if we look around and see all the sins, miseries, sufferings, and sorrows of a world far from God, what a cheering truth it is that the day is so near when we will be able to say even of the yet unbelieving Jews, "Their iniquities are forgiven, their sin is covered." Will not God be magnified? A remnant of Israel suffices not: all will be saved. Further, the miracles of Christ are called the powers of the world to come, because it was the sample of that divine energy in man which will never be revoked, though it

may be suspended. But it is always in Christ, though the church may not know how to count upon Him for it, or apply it to a needy creation. But we ought to know it is in Christ for faith to draw on, and God has rebuked our low state by withholding the display of these outward ornaments. It is good however to remember that it is always in Christ, and that He is coming, and that the end of this age will witness the exercise of the glorious power of that exalted man, the church too being associated with Him, and every blessing brought in to the exclusion of all evil. This is what the chapter before us anticipates.

As long as God does not put evil down, grace reigns; and now it is only grace that can deliver. But when the power of evil is smitten (and the Lord will smite before the millennium), the king shall rule. It is the kingdom of God administered by the exalted man, Christ; and a blessed thought it is that God has always had it in His view to exalt Him. Adam's sin was not the fall of man only, but of all the lower creation too; for the whole structure was ruined when he departed from God. Adam was not a mere individual but a head. All thenceforward depends on the coming in of another man, the Lord Jesus, who has won a title, not for Himself to stand, which He did not need, but for us to have a standing in virtue of His blood, and death, and resurrection. The consequence is that for the believer the glory of Christ is saving, not destructive. But much of its brightness is practically lost for those who do not dwell upon this scene of glory. The distinctive mark is Jehovah reigning in righteousness; and moreover, it is *a man* who thus reigns over the earth, not only a divine person. God will put all things under the man that died and rose in delivering power, as truly as Adam drew down in his fall the race and creation. The world became a wilderness of thorns and briers; it was the consequence of man's fall. Do you believe it? Believe also that the Second Man would be defrauded of no small part of His heritage if He did not deliver, not believing man only, but creation, and govern it in power and glory. This future reign is necessary to vindicate the faithfulness of God, to manifest the worth of Christ and the

results of what He has done, to display His bride along with Him. It is good therefore to look onward to the scene where this blessed man shall thus reign in righteousness. This would be true apart from our own share with Him, for which we must turn to the New Testament. The prophet's subject is earth; *we* belong to heaven. Hence it is the province of the New Testament to reveal the Father's house and heaven, no longer shut but opened, first upon Christ and consequently upon us, that we may look in peace and joy into the presence of God. What a totally different theme from the Old Testament, which brings the earth into prominence, as the scene of the reign in righteousness. In the earth it is judicial power that governs. A rod of iron, a sceptre of righteousness is that by which the Lord is to break down the pride of the world.

But there are intimations of peace and comfort too. The Lord is here viewed "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Ver. 2.) The world had long been weary of the effects of sin, if not of sin itself. Now the blessing is come. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against Jehovah, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." (Ver. 3—8.) It is not as you see now, men who appear to have every good natural quality, and yet when tested have no heart for divine things, love not the name of the Lord Jesus, care not for His glory. Here it will not be so. Blessing will flow, evil be judged, shame will vanish away. Things and persons will be manifest and bear

their true character. Man will be accomplishing for the first time on the earth that for which he was made. It is in contrast with all the deceitfulness of unrighteousness that has gone and still goes on here below. We know the uncertainty of human judgment, we know how men cling to and keep up appearances. There will be no vain show then. Good fruits will spring out of the rich resources of divine mercy, and, in the light of God then shining, there will also be the detection of everything that is false. If wickedness appear, the judgment of the Lord will fall upon it. For during the millennium there will be cases demanding vengeance; and God will not fail to deal with wickedness in a summary manner. There will be a solemn public sight of the execution of His wrath continually before men's eyes (*Isaiah lxvi.*)—the more stern in that day, because there will be no temptation to evil. Accordingly these that are the objects of God's curse will be immediately visited, so as to keep up a wholesome horror of iniquity in the hearts of men.

This leads the Spirit of God to give a warning, which will be needed, especially as the blessing of Israel will not be brought about in a single day. There will be a time of sifting. As we know there will be for Israel in the wilderness, so in Jerusalem too there will be another mode of dealing with the Jews proper. Even when the Lord appears for their deliverance, it is a mistake to suppose that all is complete at once. The Lord will gradually put down the enemies round about the Holy Land, and will use Israel as the instrument of these judgments. (*Isaiah xi., lxiii., Micah v., Zech. ix., x.*) He will send forth His armies and deal with the nations in various ways. In His appearing from heaven He does work by His own power. The Jews will have nothing to do with the judgment of the beast and the false prophet; but He will employ Israel to put down the then representatives of their old neighbours, who rise up once more in envy against them. He will remember what their forefathers did, and will then definitely deal with them, seeing that they retain and shew the same spirit to the last. Thus the Lord will act thoroughly in righteousness, and Israel will need a warning previous to this;

so I suppose this will be the bearing of it. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless one: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers: yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field." (Ver. 9—16.) The allusion is to what precedes the Lord taking His place and reigning in the land. And all the sorrow is to be *until* the Spirit is poured down upon them. (Ver. 15.) Then comes the great change in Israel. There is not of course the same dwelling of the Holy Ghost in any sense in the believer as now, for that He has a special dwelling in the church also is manifest. But there will be the outpouring of the Spirit in that day as truly as now. It is a mistake to suppose that the Lord's reigning is incompatible with the Spirit's being thus poured out. He will be poured out very largely then. *Now* it is more in depth—if we may so speak of a divine person—than in extensiveness. What is not now in breadth is made up in depth. The Holy Spirit now baptizes into union with Christ on high. Then will be the day for a wide diffusion over all flesh. Now this is only true in principle; and so it is applied from Joel ii. in Acts ii., not as if it were the full result.

The present time on earth is the reverse of a manifestation of righteousness. The righteous One was rejected of men. *God's* righteousness set Him risen at His right hand and justifies those who believe on Him. Then it will be the king, coming and sitting upon His own throne (not a rejected king exalted on

His Father's): everything will be righteous. As a matter of grace our Lord Jesus puts aside for the time His earthly Jewish titles, and the heavenly counsels are accomplished and revealed while He is above. The Father has seated Him at His right hand and said, as it were, " You shall reign ; only, till you are seated on your own throne, come and sit with me upon mine." Before Christ comes from heaven, the Jews (at least a remnant of them) will have welcomed Him in their hearts. Then He will come, where they are, to bless them in the earth, to govern them, and accomplish in the children the promises that were made to their fathers. Accordingly, when the Christians are taken from this world at Christ's coming, the Jews will in due time be converted, so as to be the earthly people of Jehovah, who will make good in their midst earthly glory according to the prophets ; and not this only, but the Holy Ghost will be poured out upon them. This great earthly change is consequent on the effusion of the Spirit from on high. Isaiah speaks of thorns and briers until the Spirit be poured upon Israel. (Ver. 15.) Instead of all being in its appropriate order, everything will need to be restored round the only due centre. All as regards the earth and the Jews is now in confusion and misrule ; but the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and then what a change ! Thus there are two things necessary to bring in this time of blessing—the king reigning in righteousness, and the outpouring of spiritual power, specially among the Jews, but also on the Gentiles. In nothing will God fail.

Then shall "the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness :" instead of its being the resort of robbers, judgment shall dwell there. Instead of covetousness hankering after the fruitful field, righteousness should remain there. Thus the work of righteousness shall be peace, and its effect quietness and assurance for ever. Ends and ways shall be righteous : all is governed with blessing. "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down on the forest ; and the city shall be low in a low place." The

proud organisation of human order, wit, and power, shall be utterly abased in that day. Nevertheless then as now there is every incentive, there is the best encouragement to earnest and free dispersion of the good seed; and grace will bless and use what was once common or unclean. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." (Ver. 18—20.) God's people shall be sheltered and prosper in peace, whatever befall His enemies. For them assured blessing takes the place of fear and evil.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE Spirit of God, having given us a blessed picture of the King Messiah reigning in righteousness, here contrasts with it a certain spoiler who is not expressly named by our prophet. But we need not find much difficulty in identifying him, if we remember the last prophecy of Ezekiel that describes a hostile Gentile power. It is remarkable that he there describes Gog as one who had been predicted before. Hence it is certain that this marauding power is not peculiar to the later prophet, who tells us in chapter xxxviii. 8—13, “After many days thou shalt be visited at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought, and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?” The next chapter comes in to show in detail that if there be that which might seem inconsistent with their security, if God permits that there should be a dark cloud gathering for a while over Palestine, it at length falls on their foes themselves; not on Israel. This appears to be the same enemy which is here introduced. It is the last effort of the great coalition against Israel, which led to the overwhelming destruction of the assembled nations, especially of the East, when Israel will have to help themselves to their arms, and their mere burial will

occupy the conquerors, and still more the spoiling of their arms and appurtenances.

I do not doubt that the Assyrian, or king of the north, *in the end* is thus described. Gog will, as I suppose, have then accomplished his long-cherished designs on Constantinople and the Turkish empire in its chief dominions. Now "the Assyrian" is a familiar subject of prophecy. This may account for the statement that they were known before. There must clearly have been predictions of him previously to Ezekiel's time, though some may have prophesied things not committed to writing.—By the way some have been too anxious to shew that the apostles never wrote anything but what we have got. It is quite enough to know that all intended to be of permanent use to the church and for God's glory is preserved. It is certain apostles taught (2 Thess. ii.), and quite possible they may have written things which were not meant of God to be preserved as part of the scriptures. But there is a character of perfectness about what we have, which to my mind precludes more. That this is not at all an exorbitant idea is evident from the fact that the apostles preached many discourses that are not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Of course we have only a very small part of what the apostles preached, as the evangelists were led to select only from what our Lord did. To have added more would have been rather to encumber scripture. Had more communications even of the apostles been added, it would have marred the perfectness of God's written word. We must have confidence in Him. He manifested His will in that all which He designed for the permanent instruction of the church was kept by His power in the midst of thousands and thousands of enemies who would have gladly destroyed the scriptures if they could. Never more in Christendom has this dislike of the word of God betrayed itself than now. But the efforts of the enemy only bring out God's power, wisdom, and goodness for all who love Him, as they will to the ruin of those who hate and despise Him.

To return, however: it is only Isaiah xxxiii. which plainly connects itself in character with the northern leader of Ezekiel,

unless we identify the Assyrian also with that power, which seems to me within certain limits to be true at the close. However that may be, the moral traits of this foe are sufficiently plain. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." (Ver. 1.) This covetous foe appears to be the last which comes up, and so far distinct from "the king of the north," which title is not limited to the end. But assuredly it is a ruler of the same sort, insatiable and treacherous. The Spirit now draws out the prophet, as personifying the godly in Israel, to cry to Jehovah, "O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them." (Ver. 2—4.) How blessed to have Jehovah as the arm to lean on and do valiantly for us! How complete the reversal when the proud and countless foes yield their spoil to be gathered like that of the caterpillars or locusts! It is Jehovah's doing, and may well be marvellous in our eyes. "Jehovah is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of Jehovah is his treasure." (Ver. 6, 7.) Thus Jehovah Himself has taken them in hand, and all becomes a spoil for Israel, and their proud hopes are blasted for ever. Note that at this very time Zion shall be filled with righteousness and judgment. The doom which swallowed up the beast and the false prophet, and the chivalry of Europe, is a lesson heard in vain. Blinded by superstition as well as the lust of universal empire, Gog dreams of destroying Israel, not believing in the presence of Christ, or thinking Him a mere human king. Thus they too will come to their own destruction.

The next verses portray the straits of the people of God and their despair before deliverance appears; nor is danger ever apt to be more felt than when blessing, that seemed to be ours, is once more in jeopardy. "Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits." (Ver. 7—9.) But man's extremity is God's opportunity, as they say; and so will the Jews then prove. "*Now* will I arise, saith Jehovah; *now* will I be exalted; *now* will I lift up myself." Had He chastened His people sore, and should the insolent foe be unpunished? "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath as fire shall devour [not Israel, but] you, and the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire." (Ver. 10—12.) It is Jehovah who undertakes to dispose of their enemies and thus addresses them. Lime may be hard, but fire ere long reduces it to powder; and thorns, let them be ever so troublesome to those with whom they come into collision, are notorious when cut up for burning with singular rapidity.

Next, attention is drawn (ver. 13) to the notable display of God's ways, as well as to the effects of these trials in showing out the true character of men even in Zion. "Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my right," followed by the most animated description of the alarm of the ungodly, and of the divine assurances to those that fear His name and walk in righteousness. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of

defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." (Ver. 14—16.)

Then follows (ver. 17—19) a sublime picture of Israel in their conscious blessedness. They should behold the King in His beauty, no longer cooped up within the beleaguered city, but free to look at the most distant part of the land or the earth. Their hearts should meditate terror, now happily and for ever past; but then it is the more sweet to look back and think of the never-to-be-forgotten rescue, when the wisest were at fault—at fault in counting up human resources, as if they could avail—at fault in overlooking the only sure Deliverer, though He be not far from every one of us. On the other hand they should see no more, hear no more the foreign foe, but look upon Zion, the Mount Zion which Jehovah loved. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Jehovah will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby. For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us." (Ver. 20—22.)

Is it not utterly vain to apply words like these to the days of Hezekiah with some ancients, or of the Maccabees with others, or to gospel times with thoughtless moderns? Even supposing that the rest of the circumstances of the Jews at either of these epochs approached the strength of the prophet's language, which is not at all admitted, who, in the face of approaching captivity, of a continual servitude to the Gentile powers, of a still more calamitous dispersion under the Romans, the effects of which last to this day—who, I say, can affirm that Jerusalem has been seen a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down? How can one hitherto apply to that city, yet trodden down of the Gentiles, the precise and most precious declaration, "*Not one* of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall the cords thereof be broken?" Let in

the light of the future for that people and place, and all is changed ; the difficulty is at an end, and no wonder ; for there “ the glorious Jehovah is unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.” And thus there is not the smallest necessity for dislocating the prophecy from all connection with its historic basis, or diverting its consolations from those whose sorrows it was given to assuage and dispel in proportion to their simplicity or strength of faith. No, whatever of comfort we may glean, whatever hopes of future triumph from its bright anticipations we may gather, let us rejoice that God is here speaking of afflicted tempest-tost Israel, who in that day will find in Jesus of Nazareth their long-estranged Lord, Jehovah of hosts, who will prove Himself to be a better safeguard than those broad rivers, of which Babylon or Nineveh might boast against Jerusalem. But a broad river has its dangers as well as its beauty, facilities, and sources of protection : so both these cities proved in opposite ways to their cost. Jerusalem has all these privileges without the perils, and incomparably more, in Jehovah. What if no galley with oars went there, what if no gallant ship passed by, will not Jehovah be their judge, Jehovah their lawgiver, Jehovah their king, and so save them pre-eminently of all nations on the earth ? And why should we weaken their claim to advance our own—we who are called into heavenly seats of glory, the object of the Saviour’s love as His Bride on high ?

To Jerusalem the King then will be their delight, and boast, and tower of strength. Had not the mightiest of old been broken when but a typical Son of David was there, looking onward to Him who will surely reign there ere long ? And what will it be when the Assyrian in his last phase—when Gog—essays to take Zion at the close of this age ? “ Thy tacklings are loosed ; they could not well strengthen their mast ; they could not spread the sail ; then is the prey of a great spoil divided : the lame take the prey.” The triumph of Israel is complete, and the more so because it will be Jehovah’s hand for them, not their own. “ And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein

shall be forgiven their iniquity." Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is Jehovah. Thrice happy they who now can rejoice in Israel's prospect, conscious themselves of a still better portion in Christ, and in a still better country, that is, an heavenly. May we be content meanwhile to share His rejection, wearing His cross, not without as an idol or vanity, but by faith graven on our hearts, and therefore proving it by the Spirit in our ways, crucified to the world and the world crucified to us! For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

CHAPTERS XXXIV., XXXV.

THE Spirit of God has here brought together the earthly extremes of unsparing judgment and of unmixed mercy; these things in two races naturally akin, but so much the more manifesting this divergence and the divine dealing with each from beginning to end. These nations, so judged and so blessed, sprang from the same stock, from the same father, from the same mother, and branched out into twin brothers, Esau on the one hand and Jacob on the other. The land of Idumea is the centre of the one picture, as of the other is Zion. The proud elder must serve the younger. There was from their birth, and before it, we may say, in antecedent revelation, much to strike the mind in these sons of Isaac and Rebecca, much that would cleave to their posterity till His coming who will not only judge righteously the past but impress the future with the signs and substance of His own glorious presence.

Yet the early history seemed little to answer either to prophecy or to its fulfilment. "Duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Kenaz," and their successors, flourished in the land of Edom, while the sons of Israel were strangers in a land that was not theirs, and ere long proving it a furnace of affliction in bitter bondage. But so it ever is: "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." If God's people hope for that they see not, they must "with patience wait for it." He who is sovereign allows that the flesh should show its character to the utmost, save where special mercy interferes to arrest and restrain because of other wise and gracious purposes. But His mercy it is, shown of His own good pleasure, which roused to madness the unbending arrogance of Edom, who never looked to God with a broken spirit even in his deepest need. On the other hand it was no small moral test for the sons of Israel, that, spite of the divine promises to them, Esau's descendants should be long settled in

peaceful enjoyment as lords of their soil, while Jacob and his seed were sojourners on sufferance, soon to be slaves—and slaves for a long while—in the land of Ham. Half the space that separated the promise from their triumphant exodus saw them a mere family group; and if they afterwards shot up rapidly into a people, it was in circumstances of increasing oppression and degradation. This was no small trial of faith, whether they looked on this side of the picture or on that. Esau had been long established in power and peace and plenty, while Israel lay among the pots of Egypt, and the accursed race of Canaan ruled in their land. And the Bible contains, in the same books, the promise and the trial which early appearances made for faith, and presents all calmly as the word of One who sees the end from the beginning, which therefore needs no apologies, puts forward no explanations, but claims the confidence of His children who know Him whom they have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep against that day that which they have entrusted to Him. The Bible does not in a demonstrative way force the truth of God upon His people; on the contrary great simplicity of faith is demanded that we receive it unhesitatingly, trusting God spite of appearances for the present and delays for the future.

Had you looked more closely and spiritually into Jacob's life, you might have expected long discipline, even as he, their father, was seen lying on his pillow of stone, Jehovah holding out the vision of glory before him. This might have prepared for the thought of trial first, then of gracious blessing. So, later, there was first the crushing of all natural hopes, and then the name of victory conferred. (Gen. xxxii.) Thus what we have in Jacob's early history prepares one for the vicissitudes of his sons. He was a poor trembling man, with plenty of faults, shrinking from the presence of his brother, in whom might appear much that was attractive naturally. But God saw under it all that the flesh is a false and proud thing—enmity with God, who allowed that the flesh should show out in him, the despiser of his birthright, its real character. Present things were his life; hence profane unbelief and slight of the things of God.

All this and more came out prominently in Esau, as they were to be verified in his race. If Gentiles, at any rate they had a blood relation with the people of God, But their very connection with them, though a sort of transition between Israel and the nations around, was the occasion of envious enmity and ruin. They were to prove that it was not only an Egypt and a Pharaoh who were raised up for God to manifest His judgment upon, but that God would do just the same to the sons of Esau, and that Esau's flesh would betray the bitterest defiance of God and His people.

The great northern enemy of chapter xxxiii. seems to be *historically* latest ; but *morally*, the account of Edom's judgment is kept for the last, perhaps as being so near to Israel by nature. After that great enemy the Assyrian is destroyed, we hear of Edom's doom decided. When God was dealing with Israel in blessing or chastisement we have Edom disputing the right of God to bless His people, and taking delight in their shame and sorrow. God resents such spite. And was it not in his race that despised the birthright ? This, no doubt, accomplished the purpose of God ; but then He admirably makes His end to agree with His word and means. Though a question of His own sovereignty, yet this goes hand in hand with His righteous ways. Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, yet God brought out at the critical time that there was also the seal of righteousness. Certainly Esau deserved to be cast off by God, though Jacob justly traces everything to His mercy and grace. Thus the transgression of selling his birthright confirms what God had already given out as a question of His own disposal. Esau showed that he did not value his birthright, present existence being dearer to him than any blessing of God. Jacob was utterly wrong in following his mother's deceitful plan to hinder Isaac's wish and secure the promise. He ought to have waited in peace and confidence, expecting God to make good His own word. But weak as he was, and wrong more than once, yet one thing you do find in Jacob, not in Esau—a heart for God, a faith that valued the promises of God. He might be apt to drop into his old ways, and to form plans for himself, for he was indeed "that worm

Jacob," as scripture calls him; but still at bottom there was a heart that clave to God and His word. So when the struggle came, when God wrestled with His servant, there was nature that needed to be withered up, lest he should suppose that because of any vigour of his own he prevailed. Still on blessing from God he was set, and would not desist till he had the assurance of it. If flesh was there to be judged, surely divine faith was very manifest. Hence Jacob becomes brighter towards the close, when the flesh was practically set aside.

So with Israel. Though there will be the judgment of their unfaithfulness, yet the day will come when the nations too will be judged, not borne with; and how will it then fare with Edom? When Israel was in the wilderness, Esau stopped their way. The power of God could have smitten him down (as He had determined long before); but the time was not yet come. So Israel struck not a blow upon their guilty brother, but rather turned back like a rebuked child. Ah! it was the token in its patience that a still more tremendous judgment was in store for Edom; for there is nothing so ominous as when God takes patiently the iniquity of men. If there be remonstrance, it shows there is, as it were, a hope; but if all is borne silently, it is the solemn sign of judgment that will fall as surely as it lingers. Blessed as it is for those who walk in grace, there is nothing that is so evident a token of perdition to the world as the saints passing through it without lifting a finger in their own defence, or on God's behalf. Alas! we know that the church has failed in this, as Israel after their sort. But their path through the wilderness was a type of the journey of faith, in grace, the earthly people and things being the shadow of the heavenly.

Possibly there may have been a preliminary judgment at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's onslaught on the Jews. I should judge from the Psalms (see especially Psalm cxxxvii., "Remember, O Jehovah, the children of Edom") that there is a connection between that and Edom: that is, this may have had a partial accomplishment in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. For though on his coming up against Jerusalem, the Edomites helped him

to destroy the Jews more effectually, they themselves were not spared by the conquerors. In Psalm lxxxiii. we find Edom connected with the Assyrian, the great enemy of the ten tribes. As we have seen with Babylon, the conqueror of the two. "Keep not thou silence, O God. . . . They have taken crafty counsel against thy people. . . . Let us cut them off." All confirms what has been already remarked. In the confederacy against Israel figure "the tabernacles of Edom." It is the first power mentioned, of course not as the mightiest, but as setting on the others to Israel's ruin. Being neighbours, they would have a better knowledge of the people and their land, and so be the more dangerous, besides the moral bearing of the case. There are also the Philistines, Tyre, and the various peoples that lived near the sea coast, as well as round about Idumea and the contiguous regions. Then we find the great power of Assur mentioned as having joined them. So the Spirit of God classes Edom with Israel's final adversaries, as He had done already by Moses and Joshua with their earliest. There is an evident connection between their rise and the gradual course of their history through scripture. Now at the close we find distinct prophecies applying to Edom. "They are confederated against thee." (Ver. 5.) All their confederacies God will break up, before the judgment falls upon Esau. They will have joined themselves unto Assur, but that great power, like the lesser ones, will be directed against God's people in vain, great and small alike hostile, joining to aim a more effectual blow upon Israel, but to the destruction of themselves.

God, we may see, always goes back to the beginning when He judges. In the time of the Babylonish captivity, why did He judge Israel? He looks at what they did in the wilderness. It was because of Moloch and Chiun. (Amos v. 26.) They had learnt to worship their images in the wilderness, and therefore should be carried captive beyond Damascus. God, when the time of judgment comes, traces up to the root of evil. So our wisdom as Christians when we fail, is to go back to our first departure. We never get right by merely judging this or that outbreak, but should always search out the cause. We do not else

gather needed strength, nor is any sin rightly judged by merely judging the manifested effects, but we must probe into the hidden sources of the mischief. It is not enough to judge our acts; judging self is a very different process. We need to discern the springs within ourselves. If we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. It does not mean pronouncing judgment upon any particular fault, but judging their real cause and not occasions merely. Such is the Christian way of judging. It is not occupation with the surface, but with that which is underneath, the hardly seen roots of the acts.

But I must return to my subject. With unerring wisdom God goes back to what Esau did from the beginning of his history. He had waited long and patiently, nearly a thousand years, and now shews His perfect knowledge of the course and end; but when the end does come, God invariably traces all up to the beginning.

I need not dwell on all the dark account. The full stroke of judgment comes upon them at the day of Jehovah. Here, though the scene is laid in Idumea, it is a question of all the heathen. This is referred to here. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of Jehovah is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea." (Ver. 1—6.) The day of the calamity of His people!

If there is anything He repeats over and over again, it is the day of their calamity. (Compare Obadiah 11—14.) He means blessing, and there is nothing that more rouses His judgment than when there is anything sorrowful and that strikes their hearts—that men should take advantage of this to behave themselves proudly against them. There was never a truer picture of the spirit of man than at this very time. It is just the feeling of Christendom towards those who are seeking to walk in the way that is pleasing to God. If failure is known that fills them with shame, it is used to wrong them, or to speak evil against them. This is the present feeling; so that we may see how true these principles of God are, and how solemn it is for us to realize the duty that becomes us at the present time.

There will be such slaughter that it might seem as if the mountains themselves had melted into blood (ver. 7). There will be one destruction upon the mountains of Israel, but another special carnage in Edom. It is important to bear in mind that this is a future judgment (ver. 8—17): if any one were to apply it rigorously and in all its extent to the times of Nebuchadnezzar, confusion must result, perverting either scripture or the facts. The contrary indeed was seen then. The nations had it all their own way. There was no such thing as God having a great sacrifice of all nations, though treacherous Edom suffered. The real fulfilment will be at the end of the age, though even then will be merely a tremendous convulsion of nature: the total dissolution of heaven and earth will be at the end of the millennium. The Spirit of God puts the scenes together here.

In most singular conjunction with this terrible picture of the vast solitude for man, created as it were only for ravenous beasts, and birds of prey, and reptiles, God turns and shows that the day that beholds this desolation for Edom inaugurated Israel's blessing. Nor is it only Israel rejoices, but God will form a large and enlarging scene for His own glory, where erst was misery and barrenness. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice

even with joy and singing : the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of Jehovah, and the excellency of our God.” (Ver. 1, 2.) Not merely fertility, but there will be every joy, fruitfulness, beauty. And assuredly man’s deeper wants are not forgotten. “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not : behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence ; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing : for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water : in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it ; but it shall be for those : the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there ; but the redeemed shall walk there : and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Ver. 3—10.)

God will then and thus show that, whatever Satan had brought of sin and woe into this world, goodness and mercy are His own delight. Such is the time that is coming for the earth, though an awful storm ushers it in. While all evil came through sin, and there is not an atom of the lower creation that does not bear some trace of Adam’s fall, there will surely come the day of Christ, the last Adam. It seems to me however, that in the world to come judgment will leave its effectual mark. On the land of Edom the destruction will be unsparing, and the land will be left as a scar upon the face of the earth. I do not say that Edom will be the only one, for Rome also will be proved to be the vile corruptress, as in Paganism, so in Christendom and in antichristendom. But

when the proud lie of the eternal city is punished for ever, then the poor and despised Jew comes forward, as it is said here: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." (Ver. 3, 4.) Vengeance accompanies their salvation. Take all its fulness of meaning. It will be accomplished to the letter. God will prove that not a word of His mercy to Israel and their land can fall to the ground. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Ver. 5—10.)

Thus fitly does Isaiah close the first main division of his magnificent prophecy.

CHAPTERS XXXVI., XXXVII.

THESE chapters form the first portion of the historical episode which severs the earlier half of the prophecy from its latter half. They are of importance not only for the weighty facts they present (for this is sufficiently done and in a two-fold point of view in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles), but for their connexion with the two sections of the Book of Isaiah. No doubt, the incidents had their value, and so also the record of them, as the most conspicuous seal which could then be affixed on the prophet's character; for the danger was extreme, the distress of the people intense, the antecedents of the King in opposition to the Assyrian by no means reassuring, the confidence of the enemy boundless. Yet was the word of Isaiah distinct and soon most punctually verified.

But there are deeper grounds for the introduction of this historical matter into the midst of the prophecy. It was of moment that the believer should have the inspired and therefore sure means of discriminating between the part which was thus accomplished and the part which yet awaits its fulfilment. We can now readily see that the Shalmanesers and the Sennacheribs of the past have not exhausted the terms and scope of the prophecy; we can understand that enough has been done to form an adequate type, an historical basis, for that which is to come and to make good every word that proceeds from Jehovah. Any mind can judge that the overthrow of the Assyrian—as the precursor of Babylon's supremacy, the captivity of Judah and the long times of the Gentiles—widely differs from the final judgment of the Assyrian, when Babylon in its last phase is itself destroyed, and the times of the Gentiles close in the glory of Jerusalem and Israel under David the beloved, their king, and the new covenant in the pleasant land.

No king had shown such trust in Jehovah since the days of David as Hezekiah. But his faith was tried. With alacrity of

heart he had made Jehovah his object, from the day he ascended the throne. "He in the *first year* of his reign, in the *first month*, opened the doors of the house of Jehovah and repaired them." (2 Chron. xxix. 3.) He inspired the Levites and priests with somewhat of his own desire to renounce long indifference for loyalty to Jehovah. "Now they began *on the first day of the first month* to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Jehovah: so they sanctified the house of Jehovah in eight days, and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end." The vessels which were cast away in king Ahaz's reign were once more prepared. "The king rose early and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of Jehovah. Atonement was made *for all Israel*, for the king commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel." What governed all was "the commandment of Jehovah by His prophets." He was the first king, since the rent of Ephraim under Rehoboam, whose heart sought that all Israel should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem to keep the pass-over unto Jehovah God of Israel. Godly predecessors felt it too little—thought not of it—certainly did nothing toward it; ungodly predecessors would have desired nothing less, however much they would have seen all Israel re-united under their own sceptre. Hezekiah clave to Jehovah and sought for all Israel the same thing. And though his overtures were laughed to scorn and mocked by most, "divers of Asher, and Manasseh, and of Zebulon, humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of Jehovah." The old altars to their false gods, at any rate unhallowed, unauthorised altars were taken away and cast into the brook Kidron, the images were broken, the groves were cut down, the high places disappeared. The due honour of the house and servants and service of Jehovah was provided for as written in His law. "And in every work that he began to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

" After these and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria had entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself." Was it not strange? A great work had been wrought in restoring the defaced lineaments of the worship of the true God throughout Judah; yet this was no sooner done, than the enemy came to swallow them up! These who judged not by scripture but by providence would at once be stumbled. Was it not plain that Hezekiah had done wrong in rejecting the traditions of his fathers? Was not God now chastening him and them for his rash reformation? Had he not lifted up his sacrilegious hand to destroy the brazen serpent that Moses made, treating with contempt as a piece of brass the venerable sign of divine grace to their perishing fathers in the desert, to which the children of Israel had till his days burned incense? Was the Assyrian a judgment?

Moreover the pious king did what he could to fortify himself, sent the lowliest message to the proud Assyrian, gave him all the silver in Jehovah's house, and stripped off for him the gold from its doors and pillars; but in vain. There was little of the simplicity, strength, or wisdom of faith in all this: no wonder that the blessing of God was not with him there, and that the enemy was emboldened to ask all. Rabshakeh is sent from Lachish to insult king Hezekiah, to blaspheme the God of Israel, and seduce the people to surrender at discretion to his master. Along with this, truth is mingled; for there were those (not Hezekiah) who did look to Egypt for help. But the aim of all was to reduce the Jews to despair, and to accomplish the designs of Assyria. Hence the very piety of the king, his zeal for Jehovah in throwing down the altars of false gods, is cunningly perverted into a charge of robbing Jehovah of His honour, from whom (he pretended) his master had received his charge to come up against Hezekiah. Thus the enemy knows how to give a religious gloss to his own wicked devices as easily as he can blacken the most faithful of God's servants. What a mercy to have the unerring standard of His word to test and be tested by!

The entreaties of Eliakim (ver. 11), that Aramean should be spoken rather than the Jewish tongue only drew out further and audacious insolence; for Rabshakeh stood and cried in that very tongue to the people on the walls, warning them against their king and commanding to them the hard terms of deportation to the east, in the face of the overthrow of the nations already broken by the Assyrian. Little did the blasphemer think that there listened to his taunting demand whether Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem, not Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah only, nor the men on the wall only, but Jehovah Himself. It was now His affair; and then at length the faith of Hezekiah begins to shine once more, whose commandment it was to answer him not.

Chap. xxxvii. His clothes rent, the king covered in sack-cloth repairs to the house of Jehovah, and enquires of the prophet, who returns Jehovah's answer that they were not to fear the words of blasphemy; for Jehovah would undertake the matter and send back the Assyrian to perish in his own land. (Ver. 1—7.)

Still confident, Sennacherib from Libnah sends a letter of similar import to Hezekiah, who spreads it before Jehovah with earnest prayer for His intervention. (Ver. 8—20.)

Isaiah again returns the answer of Jehovah God of Israel: "Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him; the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. By thy servants hast thou reproached Jehovah, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole

of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places." (Ver. 22—25.) Insult as he might, himself or his servants, the Assyrian must learn that God knew all about him, making him but the instrument of His own dealing with the nations. This work done, he must go back humbled and smitten, for he had exceeded his commission; and would God sanction his rage against Himself? (Ver. 26—29.) After a sign of coming to Judah (ver. 30—32), Jehovah pronounces His decree. (Ver. 33—35.) "Then the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead." (Ver. 36—38.) The total fall of his kingdom followed a few years after. Those that walk in pride God is able to abase. How blessed to hear His voice and know His love! Real as it was however, it was no more than a shadow of the great chief of the nations of the east in the latter day; even as Judah's deliverance and blessedness under the son of David of that day was but the witness of a brighter day and a more enduring glory, when Jehovah shall exalt him that was low and abase the high one. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it [the diadem] is; and I will give it him."

CHAPTERS XXXVIII., XXXIX.

THE history we have seen in the preceding chapters is but a testimony to the total destruction which awaits the final Assyrian, as well as his hosts, in the latter day, and upon the mountains of Israel. This will be the more striking because he will, first of all, be allowed to capture Jerusalem, and slay a portion of the men and treat with indignity some of their women. Jerusalem must pay the penalty of its sins. The Assyrian, or king of the north of Daniel, will then retire southwards for other projects of ambition; and coming up again, when Jehovah meanwhile has owned His people Israel, he will be for ever put down and destroyed.

This being so, it is evident that the mention of these historical circumstances, and no other, in the midst of our prophecy, is a remarkable sign, not only that their character is typical, but also that God would make plain to His people how far the prophecies already given had been accomplished. They might thus be encouraged to take what was already verified as an earnest of what was to come in full delivering power and glory. Nothing since that day has in the slightest degree resembled these intimations of the prophets. The past Assyrian, after having lost an immense part of his army, returned to his own land, and there was killed by his sons. The future Assyrian, after a partial success, is to come up a second time, and there and then be overwhelmed. The difference is made particularly manifest by the introduction of the past history here, typical of yet greater things, as we know from direct prophecy in chapters xxviii., xxix., not to speak of other scriptures.

But now in chapter xxxviii. we see another thing: Hezekiah is sick, and apparently unto death. The king in this shadows forth the spiritual work God will by and by accomplish in His people. For Israel is destined in that day not only to furnish a grand external display of His power, but to experience a deep

internal change—the great practical lesson of death and resurrection. This *we* learn not in our souls alone, but still more profoundly according to the full scope of grace and truth in our Lord Jesus Himself.

We find then Hezekiah given up to die; but he humbles himself before Jehovah, who sends word by the prophet that he was to live. And here we have exercise of spirit; at first, exceeding sorrow, not unmixed with fear, with regrets at leaving the land of the living, and a certain shrinking from God. Is it possible that any professing to know and teach the truth, do not perceive that this is not life and incorruption brought to light by the gospel—not what we should look for in a Christian now, though Hezekiah was as truly a saint of God as any Christian? The working of the Holy Spirit in a godly Jew was necessarily modified, deepened, heightened for the Christian because of accomplished redemption. When believers, Jews or Gentiles after the flesh, are brought to the knowledge of Christ now, they are entitled to the same high privileges. If they see or enjoy them not, it is because the flesh is not judged; they are merely following in this respect their own thoughts instead of entering into the new revelations of God founded on a dead, risen, and ascended Christ, made known by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The natural thought and hope even of a converted Jew then was to live long upon the earth. He could not say “to depart and be with Christ is far better.” It was in the land of the living he desired to praise God; as he said, “the living, the living shall praise thee.” They looked not within the veil; they saw not the Forerunner for them entered in. No such precious sights were revealed to their faith, though they did most truly expect, by God’s teaching, a coming Messiah to deliver and bless them. But they could not yet know death vanquished, nor raise the song of resurrection, nor look on a known Saviour there through the opened heavens. Hezekiah goes through the sign of death; he was sentenced however to it, and shrank from it: earnestly pleading, he hears the sentence reprieved. This is the token of the spiritual work God will effect in Israel—not only deliver-

ance from foes without, but deliverance from the power of death working in them. But the millennial kingdom will not furnish to Israel, or any other on earth, the faith or experience of the Christian, properly speaking; nor will they be raised from the dead or changed to go through that reign, but after it for eternity. The valley of dry bones is merely the symbol of their resurrection from death, when they are as a nation caused once more to live, though I doubt not there will be a real spiritual work within; but still it will be a very different thing from our portion either now or when we are caught up to meet the Lord.

"The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick I said, I shall go to the gates of the grave." (Chap. xxxviii. 9, 10.) That was to him the most terrible of all things. What can more pointedly differ from this than the triumphant language of 2 Corinthians v., for instance? There the apostle says, "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon." "We are always confident, willing rather to be absent from the body [the very thing good Hezekiah was not] and to be present with the Lord." Living here, "we are absent from the Lord." You, no doubt, find the king turning his face to the wall; but who could imagine such a thing of dying Stephen? If a Christian were simply looking at Christ, it could not be so. It is not for any of us to say what chastening might fall on self-confidence, or negligence of walk, or anything else unjudged: God might smite the pride of heart which looked down upon a person thus tried. In Old Testament times there could not be the rest and peace and joy of heart created by the revelation of Christ's work and glorified person.

In Hezekiah's case God took him, as thus manifesting the feelings of a godly Jew, to be the sign of the quickening of the Jews, who will by and by go through a spiritual process which is likened to death and resurrection. In the future however, I gather from other scriptures that their outward and inward deliverances will be in the inverse order of that which appears in the history given here. The quickening of at least the rem-

nant will precede their external triumph. Ere the antitypical Babylon has been smitten, the Jew will go through no small spiritual sifting with God, and then the mighty outward deliverance will follow when the last Assyrian is broken and disappears. Thus distinctly is the future marked off from that which has been already accomplished. God will work in them first, and then display His power in their behalf. He gives us now in Christ that in which we shall be displayed at His appearing. Thus we know death and resurrection, because we are taught everything in Christ. Therefore being dead with Christ, "why as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" *They* will be like men living in the world; and so they will have their splendid temple, and their venerable priesthood, and their imposing ordinances, "touch not, taste not, handle not." The seventh or sabbath-day will be resumed. In the millennium it will not be the Lord's day but the sabbath-day. God will renew His sabbaths instead of continuing the first day of the week, the Christian's memorial of redemption. The sabbath-day occurs once more beyond doubt in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

Thus God will have prepared His people Israel for their future glory, not by what we know now in the gospel, but by what we have seen represented by Hezekiah's sickness. He prays that he may not be brought to the gates of hell. "I said I shall not see Jehovah." (Ver. 11.) To see the Lord in the heavenly country is far better than to see Him in the land of Israel. Our joy is that we are to be *with* Him in heavenly blessing, as we know ourselves *in* Him in heavenly places even now. Such thoughts never enter the king's mind according to these words. He desired as a Jew that his life might be prolonged to see Jehovah's glory here. So Israel will see the Messiah in the land of the living, and be themselves brought under the shadow of His wing, spite of all their mighty foes. The pure in heart shall see God. We shall be with the Saviour and see Him as He is (not as He *was*, but as He *is*), and be with Himself above in the Father's house, in the presence of God. But here, on the contrary, the king mourns over his failing strength. "Mine age is departed." "He will cut me off

with pining sickness"—“as a lion, so will He break all my bones.” He repines at God’s will, not having a dead and risen Christ to interpret all by. He views death in itself, or its bearing on himself, here. How deeply even saints needed a revealed Saviour and a known redemption! “Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter.” Then in verse 15, “What shall I say? He hath both spoken to me, and himself hath done it.” Now light begins to dawn somewhat more. He has asked Jehovah to undertake for him: “He that hath spoken to me,” &c. He began to appreciate better the blessed truth that it is not what we say to Jehovah which is the great matter, but what Jehovah says to us, and, more than that, what Jehovah does for us. “I shall go softly all my years.” (Ver. 15, 16.) All this trial was just the needed discipline, and good for him. “So wilt thou recover me.” He anticipates his sure deliverance. “For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” Israel will know this in that day, and surely be brought out of their distresses. (Ver. 18, 19.)

However blessed it all may be, as showing us the working of God in the heart of a real saint of old and the type of the future ways of God to be made good in the hearts of the Jewish remnant, need I repeat that God does not give this as the full standard we ought to apply now? It is a serious thing this misappropriation of scripture, through attempting to lump together all its testimonies, old and new, as if all must be about one and the same thing. Thus what is of earth for the Jew is jumbled up with what is of heaven for the Christian: the result is a mere waste of uncertainty. Of course the Spirit of God never allows the real children of God to suffer all the consequences of their folly. There is a merciful preservative from going through with their mistakes. But still the loss is great indeed. How much we have to desire, that we may be enabled to feel, serve, walk, and worship as Christians entering into all the will of Jehovah concerning us, not as fools but as wise! All depends on a better knowledge of Christ, for this is the only sure and holy way. God’s will as regards His people on the earth depends on His counsels and ways at any given time

in His Son. Where is Christ now? He is at the right hand of God, cast out of the earth, as He said, "I go to my Father." That is, He has total rejection here but all glory there, as may be seen in John xiii.—xvii. He is thus separated to heaven, as He says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Not of course that there ever was anything impure in or of Him: such a thought of Christ would be blasphemy. It was taking a separate place from the earth, setting Himself apart from all here below as the heavenly Model-man, so to speak. This is the key to Christianity. It is the power of the Holy Ghost working in the hearts of God's children upon earth and forming them after the fashion of Christ in heaven, on the basis of His death and resurrection which has justified them by faith. Thus it necessarily supposes Christ's cross, resurrection, and ascension, and that we know ourselves in Him there. (John xiv. 20.) We become heavenly because we know Him there. "As is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly." When Christ comes in glory by and by, and takes the earth under His government, and in the truest sense fills the throne of Jehovah over it, the saints here below (not those risen and glorified) will be earthly. They will be born anew; but it will be for the earthly things of the kingdom of God. So the Lord says, "If I have told you earthly things," &c. (John iii.) There is the earthly department of His kingdom no less than the heavenly. To confound them, or the scriptures that relate to them, is to ruin the distinctness of revealed truth, and to sink into half-Jews, half-Christians. The new age, or dispensation, will accordingly, as far as earth is concerned, be the forming man here below, according to the character in which Christ will be displayed and will deal. It will be no longer the Spirit making us heavenly, because of uniting us to the Head on high. Christ will then govern the earth and its inhabitants as King, instead of gathering out from the world into one as His body. This may serve to show what a wonderful place is ours: in the midst of all the ruin of the outward framework of Christendom there is one body and one Spirit.

Chapter xxxix., I apprehend, owes its place here chiefly as a basis for the very weighty place which Babylon (whither Judah was going into captivity) holds in the controversy which Jehovah has with His people. Hezekiah had not walked softly when the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan came to congratulate him, but sunk to their level. Wherefore Jehovah sent the threat of sure judgment. All David's son had vainly spread before the eyes of the strangers should be swept into the city of confusion, the chastiser of Jerusalem's idolatry: only it should not fall in the days of the pious king.

CHAPTER XL.

A SENSIBLY different portion of the prophecy now opens on us. No longer is the overthrow of kings and peoples in the foreground; nor are we occupied as before with the various Gentile enemies that long beset and troubled Israel. Hence, most appropriately introducing it, stands a touching controversy between God and His own people. We are evidently not looking here on God's dealings without; we enter within. Thus judgment begins as ever at the house of God: and more closely and thoroughly than the same process in the preface of our prophecy. (Chap. i.) More was wanted than ways and judgments in providence. There are moral wants and spiritual wrongs which must be taken up if the people are to be blessed according to God; and what makes the distinction so much the more striking is the fact that we shall find Babylon again in a totally different aspect from that which had been seen as yet, not so much in her aspect of worldly magnificence and power, but in her sad notoriety as the source and bulwark of idolatry on earth. Evidently this accords with God's pleading with His people, and His distinct unfolding of the chastening that He caused to light upon them because of their idolatry, and even worse spiritual sins, as we shall see. Thus not political but spiritual wickedness is here before us; into which they had been drawn by the enemy to set them into opposition to God Himself. And this gives rise to an altogether different character of revelation and even style of address, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," graciously lets us see the end of all. In the beginning of the book the Spirit of God appealed to Israel as the people then were, showing us God's judgment of their wickedness and the bringing in of the glory of the Lord. Here too the same Israel are guilty, and the glory of Jehovah is to be established surely; but before we behold the distressing picture of what they really were in His eyes, He begins with

sure words of comfort, so that the heart of every saint would be strengthened at the very outset with the assurance that they were the object of divine mercy, and thus would the better bear to hear what the Lord must tell them of their grievous faults.

The chapter before formed a kind of link with what follows ; for there we had the prediction of their captivity to Babylon ; which, as has been often remarked, holds a peculiar place. Babylon being the beginning of the great image of Daniel, becomes also the type of the last. The head of gold received supremacy from God in a more direct form than any of the other powers, which were only successors in the line. The grant of imperial power was immediate from the God of heaven to Nebuchadnezzar, who thus typified in a certain sense the image from first to last. More particularly the fall of Babylon prefigured the overthrow of the world-power in the earth, and represented the final judgment of that system of universal supremacy then begun, and, if not still going on, only suspended ; for the image-power has not yet been struck by the stone, and is awaiting its reorganization before it is dissolved for ever. Its components are at present in a broken state, but by and by they will again coalesce with an appearance of amazing and renewed strength, which its last head will use directly to oppose the Lord of lords and King of kings. This Revelation xvii. clearly shows us ; for the judgment of Babylon and the beast as there set forth is not yet accomplished.

Babylon has thus a special place as being the power of all others that was allowed to enslave Jerusalem, and the house of David, from whom the Deliverer of Israel was to spring. Now we know that the Son of David is actually come, that He was presented to Israel and rejected by them, that He suffered death on the cross, and is gone up to heaven, where He has taken His place, not as Son of David, but as the rejected Son of man who is the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is there, the great high Priest of God as well as Head of the church, seated at the right hand of God, where and whence He acts in power and love, sending down whatever is needful for the good of the

saints and for the testimony of God here below. That is what Christ is now doing, not at all as yet fulfilling the prophecies of the Son of David as such. Hence any one who takes up the Old Testament to find the full and clear announcement of what occupies Christ now must either give up these prophecies as dark and unintelligible, or he must put a false gloss and violent strain on them to eke out such an application as their full scope. In truth they refer to the future, not to the present; and to Israel, God's earthly people; not to the heavenly church, save in certain general principles or special allusions to the Gentile parenthesis, which the provident wisdom of the Holy Ghost took care to furnish in order to confound God's adversaries. Then there are displays of God in moral ways from which, though about Israel rather than ourselves, we can and ought to extract for our own souls that which is most helpful and cheering. For God is good and full of tender mercy to Israel; and He is surely not less full of grace to us. If He is love to the people He will govern, can He love less the children He now adopts to Himself by Jesus Christ? There are no doubt great differences between the saints He calls now, and those who are to be blessed in the age to come. Now it is His church, Christ's body, the children He is bringing into the place of heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Israel will inherit the promises made to the fathers; but we, if Christ's now, are heirs with the firstborn, not merely of "the fathers," but of God the Father.

When we take up the prophecies thus, not biassed with the foregone conclusion of finding ourselves in them, but simple and free to understand them as they are written, and the proper objects God was speaking of, nothing can be clearer or more certain. Here for instance He calls to comfort His people. The ground He puts it on is, that the warfare of Israel is over. The Lord now interposes. Bad as Jerusalem's sins were, she had to His reckoning of love suffered double what her sins deserved. He is not looking at the sins of Jerusalem apart from Christ, but as it were through Him. If there were no suffering Messiah connected with Jerusalem, nothing would

remain but her sins and their judgment. But God always looks at Christ for them and can thus say, "Comfort ye, comfort ye."

Next we have the manner in which the comfort will be brought home to them. Here we have a grave and interesting insight into God's ways. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." The allusion is evident to John the Baptist, who was "sent from God" to bear witness of the true light and prepare a way for the Messiah. In the midst of his testimony he was slain. Messiah too came, and in the midst of His testimony He was slain. Master and servant, they were both cut off by wicked hands. Thus God's work was, as far as man could see, nipt in the bud; and hence the world is yet in misrule, confusion, in sin and misery. When God really fulfils for the earth what He has at heart, there will be the manifest power of blessing to His glory. But look up, not down, and read in the risen and glorified Christ the proof to faith that the cross, the very thing that seemed the total ruin of all the counsels of God, is in truth their eternal basis and justification, by which He is and will be for ever glorified; the cross of the Lord Jesus is the triumph of grace, as the resurrection and ascension are its righteous answer; but it is a triumph known only to faith. The world sees not heaven opened nor Him who is there—saw in the cross One who suffered to death. In the Acts of the Apostles man's rejection of Christ is constantly contrasted with God's raising Him from the dead. Thus we see that man and God are in complete opposition. The cross is not thus looked at in the light of God's purposes, but of man's wickedness. In the epistles the truth chiefly insisted on is the cross, not so much as the crowning point of all man has done against God, but as the deepest exercise of the grace that God feels towards guilty man. Not that grace was created by the cross; it was in God before the coming of Christ, and *because* of it He sent His Son. The propitiation is the fruit of God's grace, not its cause. Propitiation vindicates it, judges and puts aside all the sin on man's part that otherwise would have proved an insurmountable barrier. But the love was on God's part from everlasting. We must bear this in mind in looking at propitiation, which

indeed is the strongest possible proof of His love, while it equally proves His holiness and necessary judgment of our sins. John's testimony was a call to repentance in view of Messiah's advent; his baptism therefore was a confession both of sins and of Him who should come after himself. It was the "voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," not the person nor the work of Israel's hope. But Israel as a whole was blind and deaf; the testimony was interrupted, the Messiah refused. There was therefore a twofold accomplishment, the people's unbelief thus intercepting and breaking off the thread of God's ways, while His counsels abide irrefragable and accomplished, through their unbelief, in the cross as they never else could have been. The way of Jehovah was not yet prepared, nor was there a straight highway in the desert for God. Man was put on his responsibility and heard the cry only to sin; by and by God will make all good in grace by His own power. But every valley *shall be* exalted; every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed and all flesh (not Israel only) shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.
(Ver. 3—5.)

Thus plainly you have, as far as its scope goes, the sure purpose of God. Every difficulty, depths, heights, rough or smooth, all must disappear: for God yet means to make this earth the scene of His glory. A most blessed prospect it is, that the sin, misery, and weakness of man, the groaning of all creation around, the wiles and power and presence of Satan must vanish and give place not to the revealed grace of God in Christ, which has shone we know in the despised Nazarene, but to the revealed glory of Jehovah, when all flesh shall see it together. It cannot refer to the day of the judgment of the dead because it will not be "all flesh" nor any flesh whatever, but the dead raised before the great white throne. But here it is a question of man living in his natural body on the earth. The Jew was apt to overlook the judgment of the dead at the end of all dispensations; the Gentile is just as negligent as to the judgment of the quick, though it be confessed in the commonest symbols of

Christendom. As infidelity increases, the rejection of this truth is perhaps more complete now than ever since the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

In the dark ages people at least believed enough to be panic-struck from time to time; but now Christians are accounted fanatics if they testify of these coming judgments. But none the less will God cut short the course of this world, and the glory of Jehovah be revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together. This John the Baptist had to announce: only the first word committed to him, and already accomplished in its measure, was the preparing the way of Jehovah. Hence I think that the third verse does not solely refer to the mighty changes of the new age, but includes also such a *moral* preparation as befitted the coming of the Lord in humiliation. Thus, for the time, it went no farther than God's working in the hearts of a remnant, whose souls were made to be in a measure prepared for the Messiah. We know that such was the fact. See John's disciples leaving him to follow Jesus, and John delighting in it. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Hence says our Lord in Matthew xi., "*If ye will receive it,* this was Elias that was for to come," clearly showing that to faith, John the Baptist was Elias (compare Mark ix. 11—13); but, as a matter of fact, the full predicted circumstances are postponed till the great day that is coming (compare Malachi iv.). Thus he is to come, not before the Lord takes up the church, with which he has nothing to do; but before the proper blessing of Israel, with whom he has a close connexion. John the Baptist went before Jehovah-Jesus in *the spirit and power* of Elias; but Elias himself publicly vindicated the true God in opposition to the apostacy of Israel and to the discomfiture of the priests of Baal. He will return by and by, and resume a work of the most solemn character before the great and terrible day of the Lord. John Baptist anticipated this in the way of preparing a remnant for receiving Him who should and did come.

Next, the "Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Here follows the substance of John the Baptist's testimony, though it may be still more manifest in the end of this

age. "All flesh is grass." It is man morally and universally. "And all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." Could a man use this to think well of himself? Verse 7 cuts down all boasting—"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of Jehovah bloweth upon it." It is not its beauty but its frailty God refers to. The moment you have God testing its character, if it were only by the breath of His nostrils, all flesh comes to nothing; and this, too, in Israel, not in Gentiles only: "surely the people is grass." Nor is this all; He utters its sentence again and again. The reason for the first repetition seems to be the emphatic judgment of "*the people*," that is, the Jews. The second case is particularly connected with the resource for faith. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever." These two truths are of no less importance at the present moment, as we know how Peter used them for the Christian Jews from the first. They will be urgently needed when God begins to work in the Jews once more, when they painfully learn, feel, and prove the utter worthlessness of man as he is in divine things. Even now the men of the world are making no small strides; but they will do greater things; and the devil will mature and display his plans as they have never been witnessed in the world before; and what will be their security? "The word of our God shall stand for ever."

But as the church really came to view, as the heavenly mystery of Christ, or rather part of it, when all hopes of the earth and man for the present (and always as far as they are concerned) were buried in Christ's grave, so I believe, as the end draws nearer, we do greatly need with simplicity to rest upon God's word. We may, as only knowing in part, understand but little, but it is a poor feeling and unworthy to be called faith only to believe His word when understood. Not that it is not sweet and cheering when we consciously enter into any of its depths; but intelligence of the word is the gift of grace and product of faith, not the ground why I believe. God sends me His testimony and my soul bows to it, setting to my seal that God is true. Am I a sinner without peace or even

hope, or any real anxiety before God? That word comes and pronounces to my conscience that all flesh is grass. My soul is laid bare. If I do not believe God, all my life and death will be just the proof of my folly and sin. But if I submit to the humbling yet gracious testimony of God, while proving its truth in what I am, I enter into the comfort and strength of His own word, and I too am made to stand through that same word. "The word of our God shall stand for ever." Our experience follows, and confirms of course the truth of the word in breaking me down. Thus God's word is the only standing ground. Yet outwardly the word of God is just like the cross of Christ. There may well be difficulties to such as we are, and it seems a weak thing to confide in for eternity; but, in truth, it is more stable than heaven and earth. So in 2 Timothy the apostle, anticipating the ruin of Christendom, casts the man of God on this unfailing resource.

But we turn in the next verse to the special earthly object of God's affection—Zion. It is the symbol of the grace of God working in Israel, also the centre of the royal glory that is about to be revealed in Israel. "O Zion that bringest good tidings," &c. (Ver. 9—11.) There can be no doubt, the person who came of old and will come by and by is Christ; in a word, the same Jesus is not only Christ but Jehovah. He is here spoken of as the God of Israel, Jehovah, whose reward is with Him and His work before Him. First of all is His coming in power; next, with all tenderness of heart, as One taking compassion on them, *because* of their defenceless and exposed condition. Then (ver. 12 *et seq.*) when we come to inquire who this great and loving Deliverer is, He is no such mean conqueror as Rabbis dreamed of and the carnal desires of Israel so long clung to; He is the Creator. Even then it was God's warning of His judgment on the idolatry of Israel, which is the first great question in this part of Isaiah's prophecy. The people would follow the Gentiles in their following after idols. But before the Spirit of God deals with this iniquity, He first of all identifies the Messiah with God, and *how* and what He is as the eternal and only wise Creator and Governor of all things. This accordingly gives an occasion for

a glorious description of God. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." (Ver. 13—17.) Then He challenges the folly of those that set up graven images as His likeness. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." (Ver. 18—26.) Lastly He falls back on what He has been to His own from the beginning. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known?"

hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Ver. 27—31.) He cannot deny Himself, nor fail to strengthen the weakest that wait on Him.

CHAPTER XLI.

THIS chapter, if it be not a second part with the preceding one as the first, is a most appropriate sequel. For Jehovah, having opened His counsels as to Jerusalem and its comfort (after many vicissitudes and troubles) at His coming in power and glory, turns now to the Gentiles, challenging them to meet Him in judgment. He had there been displayed in His shepherd care over Israel, in His might and wisdom over all, needing no counsellor, and the nations counted less than nothing and vanity, so that comparison or image was futile, and Israel's unbelief was the more deplorable because of His special goodness to all amongst them who waited on Him. Now He says (ver. 1), "Keep silence before me, O islands, and let the people[s] renew their strength : let them come near, then let them speak ; let us come near together to judgment."

Cyrus is the text. It is no question of a past name of renown, but of a future deliverer, of whom God knew all ; man and his idols could say nothing. Before the prescient eye of the prophet stands the mighty conqueror of Babylon. None but the true God, who made him the instrument of His designs in providence, had anticipated his rise. Jehovah here describes him, but typically (in the manner of the prophetic Spirit) as the shadow of a greater than Cyrus, who should for ever overturn the idols of the nations, judge their pride, and deliver the people of Israel from all their captivities. "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings ? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them and passed safely, even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning ? I Jehovah, the first, and with the last ; I am he." (Ver. 3, 4.)

It is as vain to drag in the gospel of Christ here as to inter-

pret Jacob and Israel in chapter xl. of Christendom. Nor is the plea at all valid that the Jews will never more meddle with idols. Matthew xii. 43, xxiv. 15, not to speak of the Revelation, are clear evidence confirmatory of Isaiah lxv., lxvi., and of other passages in the Old Testament, which prove that the end of the age will see a fatal revival of idolatry, the return of the unclean spirit with the full antichristian power of Satan, which will bring down the Assyrian scourge on the Jews and also the Lord's coming in vengeance. The last state of that generation then which rejected Christ will be characterised both by idol-worship and the Antichrist: so that, on this score, there is no pretence for turning aside the expostulation to the Gentiles that are now baptized, or for interpreting Jacob and Israel of Christendom as some have done who ought to have known better. Again, it is absurd to say that the gospel could be foreshown by the first one raised up from the east; for, among the Jews, the east was always reckoned *from* Palestine, never Palestine itself. The Rabbinical idea (strange to say, espoused by Calvin) was not so unreasonable: the allusion, they thought, was to Abraham, who was a righteous man called out of Mesopotamia. But all else fails. For who could think that his exceptional sally against the kings of the east who were returning after their successful raid into the valley of the Jordan, or the incidents of Pharaoh and Abimelech, duly answer to the giving up of nations and subduing kings, making his sword as a column of dust and as the driven stubble his bow in resistless progress? Still less does it suit the testimony of Christ in the gospel. The comparison of chapter xlv. 1, 13 may convince any thoughtful mind that Cyrus is really in view, but of course ultimately as foreshadowing the triumph when Christ comes in His kingdom, putting all enemies under His feet, instead of gathering souls out of the world in one body for heaven as He is now doing by the Holy Ghost's power through the gospel. (Comp. also Ezra i. 1—3.) If the Babylonish captivity of Judah was the divine chastening of their idolatry by means of the chief patron of idols on earth, the fall of Babylon was a tremendous blow on its own idolatry, predicted as it was by the Jewish

prophet long before either event. These were among the reasons which made the first success and the final ruin of Babylon so important in scripture. They were bound up with God's ways in His people. And hence the answer to the infidel sneer touching the silence of prophecy respecting America. What has the discovery or growth of the new world of the far west to do with Israel? From the New Testament again all such matters are excluded, because the rejected Messiah involves not only the disappearance of Israel and the kingdoms of the earth from the foreground, but the calling of the church for glory in the heavenly places as the body and bride of Christ, at least until the corruption of Christendom becomes morally unbearable and the age ends in the judgment of apostate Jews and Gentiles, under the beast and the false prophet, when Christ and His glorified saints appear from heaven, and the godly remnant of Jews here below become a strong nation, the earthly centre of His kingdom under the whole heaven.

Hence the suitability here of confronting in this very connection "Jehovah, the first, and with the last," the One who had wrought and spoken. Why were the gods of the nations silent and powerless? why were the boasted oracles dumb? If the fall of Judah, moral necessity as it was (unless Jehovah must sanction His own dishonour in the midst of His people and sustain them to give His glory to a graven image), made His power questionable in a Gentile's eyes, let them learn in the downfall of Babylon, which the Jews alone knew generations beforehand, even to the name and race of him who was its instrument, that His righteousness and wisdom were no less than His power, and that the chastised Jews were the people of His choice. "The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my

friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." (Ver. 5—9.)

The honour to which Cyrus was called by the way was no change in His purposes or affections respecting Israel. Not Cyrus but Israel was His servant. (See ver. 8, 9.) "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I Jehovah thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith Jehovah, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." (Ver. 10—16.) These last words, however, render it beyond just doubt that the prophet carries his eye far beyond the immediate occasion, and presents not the condition of the Jews under their Persian or other Gentile lords, but days still future when Israel shall take them captive whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors. It is impossible to apply to the same period Nehemiah's language (chap. ix.) and the prophetic description here. "Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress." (Ver.

36, 37.) Here the word is in manifest contrast: "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth : thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small," &c. : figurative language, no doubt, but figures neither of servitude, nor of the grace of the gospel, but of triumph when the true Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, and Israel shall flourish and tread down the wicked in the day that shall burn all the proud and lawless as an oven. The Maccabean and Apostolic triumphs of Vitrunga and others are a burlesque on a sound interpretation. Not only must we leave room for the future, but for a total change from the character of God's actual working in and by the church. Now it is grace building living stones on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; then it will be the awful descent of the Stone cut without hands on the statue of Gentile empire in its last phase, which corresponds with the judicial functions of Israel there described in that great day.

Not that refreshment will fail from Jehovah for Israel. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I Jehovah will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys : I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree ; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together : that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." (Ver. 17—20.)

The Lord then recurs to a renewal of His challenge to the Gentiles and their idols, but in terms of justly increased contempt for their trust in a thing of nought, again grounding His appeal on their ignorance of the scourge of idolatry who would come from the north and east. "Produce your faith, saith Jehovah ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and show us what shall

happen : let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them ; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods : yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought : an abomination is he that chooseth you. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come : from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name : and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know ? and before-time, that we may say, He is righteous ? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them : and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. For I beheld, and there was no man ; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." (Ver. 21—28.) There was not even reason—nothing but insensate folly in men owning as gods things which could neither speak nor hear. "Behold, they are all vanity ; their works are nothing : their molten images are wind and confusion." (Ver. 29.) Human helps to devotion are the death-bed of faith.

CHAPTERS XLII., XLIII.

DISTINGUISHED as the place of Cyrus might be as the righteous man from the east, whom God employed to break the pride of Babylon and set the captives free to return to the land of Israel, a greater is here. “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” (Ver. 1—4.) We know that Christ is intended (the typical, as I suppose, giving occasion to the introduction of the Antitype). It is the more remarkable as being lost after this brief moment, when the prophetic strain resumes its previous course, and the servant of Jehovah elsewhere in this chapter and to the end of chapter xlviii. is unequivocally not Christ, but Israel.

Here however it is the Lord, the object of Jehovah’s delight as of His choice, the vessel of the power of the Spirit, and the manifester of judgment to the nations, compared with whom the Gentile avenger of God’s honour on the source and patron of all idols was little indeed. Yet He whose glory was thus beyond all competition displayed it first in perfect unobtrusive lowliness. Might of far-reaching testimony even was not what characterized Him thus, meek retirement rather, not only in presence of murderous hatred, but away from the multitudes that followed Him and the admiration of the healed who would have spread His fame. He “charged them that they should not make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant,” &c. (Matt. xii. 14—21.) This state of things is seen here terminated by the victory of His second advent, when He shall

set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for His law. The intervening action of the Holy Ghost here below, while He is exalted on high, does not enter into account.

This leads Jehovah in magnificent terms to speak of what He will accomplish through His own name and glory, in contrast with graven images. (Ver. 5—16.) Then, in verses 17 *et seq.*, the utter shame of such as trust in these lying vanities is insisted on, so as to touch the conscience of the guilty Jew. “Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind but my servant? or deaf as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect and blind as Jehovah’s servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.” (Ver. 18—20.) It is Israel who are in view. Such were their privileges, such their responsibility, and such their woeful failure. Jehovah contrariwise is right in all His ways. “Jehovah is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? did not Jehovah, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.” (Ver. 22—25.)

After all their faithlessness to His name, which entailed on Israel the fury of Jehovah (yet misunderstood and unfelt through the blinding influence of idolatry) in chapter xlivi., He proclaims *His* faithfulness who had called Israel by their name and made them His own. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy

Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory. I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified: or let them hear and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." (Ver. 2—10.) This renders the subject (namely Israel as God's servant) as plain as His own mercy in the last days. The Jews by their idol-loving were the blind people that had eyes and the deaf that had ears. Yet were they alone of all nations Jehovah's witness and His servant. They will yet know, believe, and understand. It was because of Him whom they rebelled against that they have been so spoiled; it is because of Him that they will be delivered, pardoned, and blessed; for as He, Jehovah, is the only God, so is He equally the sole Saviour. It was for Israel's sake that He had sent to Babylon and brought down their pride; and new things should cause the old wonders to be forgotten when God gives water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert for His chosen people, formed for Himself to show forth His praise. It was God who once, for their sins, profaned the princes and people of Israel; it is He who for His own sake will blot out their transgressions and justify themselves. Before that day dawn, *we* know (what is to them still a secret) the great salvation by His grace, whereby alone He can thus righteously deal with the guilty: Christ, the cross, is the only key.

CHAPTERS XLIV., XLV.

THE opening verses (1—5) seem to be the proper conclusion of the foregoing chapter. The salvation of God is worthy of Himself, even as it springs from His own grace, and can have no end short of His own glory. Hence it is that not only God blots out His people's transgressions for His Son's sake, and will not remember their sins, but that He would banish their fear and fill them to overflowing with His blessing. "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have chosen: Thus saith Jehovah that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall subscribe himself with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Ver. 1—5.) There is not the slightest need, nay, nor even room, for diverting these exceeding precious promises from Israel to the Gentile. It is quite true of course that the wild olive graft enjoys all this too; but the word of Jehovah is pledged and sure to Jacob His servant. The express object is banishing the dread of the conscience-stricken Jews after their long departure from the true God. Elsewhere express allusions to the call of the Gentiles during that interval appear as notably in Isaiah lxv.; but the point here is the consolation of the ancient people when grace is at work on their behalf.

Some, like Fry, from whose general teaching better might have been expected, were led into this misconception by not understanding how the next section (ver. 6—20) could have any just bearing on the future ways or dangers of the Jew. But this is to overlook a large part of scripture, and a solemn

portion of that wonderful people's destiny. For two thousand years idolatry has not been their snare, but other characters of evil, leading to and consequent on the rejection of their Messiah. This, as we shall find, has its place in our prophecy from chapter xl ix. to lvii.; as the general picture is portrayed with signal precision in Hosea iii. 4. But it is certain, both from the Old and the New Testament, that in the latter day they will fall once more into their old love of idols, along with the acceptance of the Antichrist, thus finally reproducing together the two sins of the past which had, each of them, brought on them such stern judgment providentially, from God's vengeance: and "there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Comp. Matt. xxiv. 15, with verse 21.) There is thus no ground for turning aside these plain predictions of Isaiah from the literal Israel of whom he speaks so often and emphatically to the apostate churches of Christendom. Idol-worship is here, no doubt, and will surely not go unpunished; but the mass of the Jews in future days will fall for the last time into that besetment and worse. Hence, while the remonstrance of the prophet bore on the evil of his own days, there need be no question of its being requisite for the Jew up to the end.

And who can assert the glory of the true God? who expose the folly of false gods, like the Holy Ghost? "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his redeemer Jehovah of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image

that is profitable for nothing ? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed : and the workmen, they are of men ; let them all be gathered together, let them stand up ; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms : yea, he is hungry and his strength faileth : he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule ; he marketh it out with a line ; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man according to the beauty of a man ; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest : he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn : for he will take thereof, and warm himself ; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread ; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it ; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire ; with part thereof he eateth flesh ; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied : yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image : he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me ; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood : for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see ; and their hearts that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire ; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof ; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it : and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination ? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree ? He feedeth on ashes : a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand ? ” (Ver. 6—20.) The sarcastic shafts of classic poets are poor in comparison for beauty or power, not to speak of their worthlessness morally ; for mere ridicule, which ends in leaving the satirist at the shrine of his despised divinities,

is the mirth of a fool which ends in sorrow and shame without end.

Not so Isaiah: "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for Jehovah hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith Jehovah, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am Jehovah that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, Jehovah, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." (Ver. 21; chap. xlv. 1—4.)

The challenge of Jehovah which begins with verse 5 does not appear to me a mere repetition of that in chapter xliv. 6,

et seq., but in a very interesting way meets the special evil into which those fell who under Cyrus overthrew Babylon and its idolatrous vanities. For the Persians were famous for their dualistic scheme of good and evil, light and darkness, Ormusd and Ahriman. What can be more pointed in view of the awful confusion of this scheme than the words that follow?—"I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I Jehovah do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I Jehovah have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands. Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetttest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" (Ver. 5—10.)

If Jehovah reprove with woe upon woe all striving with Himself and fault-finding with His ways, how graciously He calls on His people in the very next verse to ask Him of things to come about His sons and to command Him unto the work of His hands? (Ver. 11.) He who made heaven and its host, earth and man upon it, was the raiser up of Cyrus to build His city and liberate His captives, "not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts." The haughtiest of the Gentiles should yet own God to be in Israel, as strangers once owned the power of the Spirit in the church. Then when the last idol-makers shall go to confusion, Israel shall be saved in Jehovah with an everlasting salvation. (Ver. 14—17.) Jehovah, the Creator, had not spoken in secret nor bid the seed of Jacob seek Him in vain: He speaks righteousness. The closing appeal is exceedingly urgent, grand, and triumphant: "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the

nations : they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near ; yea, let them take counsel together : who hath declared this from ancient time ? who hath told it from that time ? have not I the Lord ? and there is no God else beside me ; a just God and a Saviour ; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength : even to him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Ver. 20—25.) The commentators clash as to the "escaped of the nations." But the conjecture of Mede is far from the mark : for he puts the expression along with Revelation xxi. 24. He ought to have known that "the nations of them that are saved" would be the converse of Isaiah's phrase, rather than a parallel. But it is a bad reading, probably from a scholium of Andreas, and contrary to every authority of value, all of which have simply the "nations." Our prophet widens the salvation in these concluding verses : "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." So in the next verse, "unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." This extends beyond "all the seed of Israel who shall be justified and glory in Jehovah." It is clearly applied to the Lord Jesus by the Apostle Paul, in the largest extent, and with the utmost depth of its meaning. (Rom. xiv., Phil. ii.)

CHAPTERS XLVI.—XLVIII.

THESE three chapters close this section of the prophecy, the discussion of Israel's guilty love of idols in presence of the doom of Babylon, the patron of idolatry and the instrument of the punishment of the Jews for that sin.

Chapter xlvi. in the most spirited way contrasts the fall of the helpless objects of Babylonish worship with God's gracious care over Israel. "Bel [their chief god answering to the Zeus of the Greeks] boweth down, Nebo [answering to the Greek Hermes] stoopeth: their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beasts. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity." (Ver. 1, 2.) Thus, chief or subordinate, these false deities could do nothing for their votaries, and could not deliver themselves. The victorious foe carries them off as part of the spoil.

On the other hand, Jehovah had carried Israel from their national birth to their old age: "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you." (Ver. 3, 4.)

Next follows the challenge to whom they would liken the God of Israel. As for the Chaldean gods, it was but a question of gold and silver, which the goldsmith made up, and the people fell down and worshipped. (Ver. 5, 6.) "They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth, from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this and shew yourselves men; bring it

again to mind, O ye transgressors.” Nor is this the only appeal. It was well to bethink them that the gods of the nations were beneath those that adored them: but the prophet adds (ver. 9), “ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.” Cyrus is here again cited as a striking proof of the reality of God’s dealings with His people, and this both in foreknowledge, in declared purpose, and in providential ways. This leads to the concluding call: “ Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.” (Ver. 12, 13.) Such is the end.

Chapter xlvii. shews us the degradation of Babylon itself, as in the preceding chapter we had judgment executed against its gods.

“ Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called The lady of kingdoms.” (Ver. 1—5.) The anger of God at His people was no justification of their merciless behaviour (ver. 6), and their confidence in the stability of their resources would be the precursor of ruin. (Ver. 7—10.) “ Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence

it riseth ; and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put it off ; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know." What made the taunt the more cutting was Babylon's boast in their sorceries and enchantments ; but even so, they could not profit nor prevail. (Ver. 11—15.) As they could not predict, still less could they save.

Chapter xlviii. is a more direct and exclusive appeal to Israel, to those that come forth "out of the waters of Judah." It is a beautiful homily to His people (ver. 1, 2), explaining why God had long foretold, and then suddenly acted. They could not thus defraud Him of His praise. (Ver. 3—8.)

In verse 9 Jehovah tells them why He had not cut them off. "For my name's sake, will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver ; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it : for how should my name be polluted ? and I will not give my glory unto another." (Ver. 9—11.)

Then (ver. 12 *et seq.*) comes a tender expostulation, accomplished in measure at the return from captivity, but to be fulfilled by and by more fully. Cyrus had not acted without the God who had called him by name. Nor was it (save judicially) he who had ordered things for Israel. The word is, "Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob." The moral is, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." It is a misconception of Israel's future to imagine that no future question arises between God and them as to graven images.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A NEW division of Isaiah opens here. It is no longer Babylon and idolatry and a destruction viewed as the overthrow of image worship in the earth. Here it is the far deeper question of Christ Himself and His rejection by the Jews. We shall find that this portion, from chapter xl ix., runs down to the end of chapter lvii. where, as the former said, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked," so the latter ends with "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" "Jehovah" being in contrast with idols, and "my God" connected with the still deeper badness of the people in refusing the true God and eternal life, even the Lord Jesus their anointed King. They were wicked in both respects; wicked in going after false gods of the Gentiles; wicked yet more in rejecting their divine Messiah.

The chapter opens with a call to the isles to listen. "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from far;" because Jehovah had called Israel from the womb, and made mention of his name from the bowels of his mother. There was a great providential preparation. "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me" (there was thus protection also), "and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Such was the purpose of God about Israel.

"Then I said (says Christ) I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." Christ substitutes Himself for Israel. They had been the servant nominally and responsibly; Christ becomes the true Israel and servant of God, when the other proved false. Nevertheless, even in Christ all comes to nothing at first. "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God." The failure, apparently, of the purposes of God in the first instance from

man's wickedness only leads into a better establishment of them and to a more glorious form and display in result. "And now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, ye shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God shall be my strength." This is the comfort of Christ, that although the work was not done, and Israel would not be gathered (how often would He have gathered her!) yet would He be glorious. "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The original thought was to gather Israel, but Israel would not be gathered. Then, says God, That is a light thing, I will gather the Gentiles also. But He is first given as a light to the Gentiles. It is rather going out than gathering in: at any rate that is the turn given to the passage now, under Christianity. While Israel is not yet gathered, Christ becomes a light to the Gentiles. But God's purpose never fails, and so we find, "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth" (it is clear that Christ is now viewed as a rejected person, the cross being the great expression of that rejection), "to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith Jehovah, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people (that is, of Israel) to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." It is evident that this supposes that all is in ruin, but that the Lord Jesus is the destined repairer of all the breaches. "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall

come from far : and lo, these from the north and from the west ; and these from the land of Sinim." (Ver. 10, 11, 12.) It is the return of Israel that is here predicted from all parts of the earth but a return after they have been dispersed there ; so that not only from the north and south, but even from the land of Sinim—that is, from China—they finally emerge and gather in Palestine.

Then we find a call to not merely the isles, but heaven and earth. "Sing, O heavens ; and be joyful, O earth ; and break forth into singing, O mountains." This is in view of the Lord's comforting His people and showing mercy to His afflicted. It is the last days and the Lord reviewing His goodness and calling upon all the universe to be joyful. "But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But Jehovah pleads with Zion's reproach and says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee." (Ver. 15—17.) The enemies of Israel disappear, and Israel comes forward, long forgotten apparently, but now to be established for ever. And so God calls upon them to lift up their eyes, "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell." (Ver. 18—20.) It is the harvest of joy after the long sowing in tears. And now there seems no room to stow away the children. "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro ? and who hath brought up these ?

Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been." (Ver. 21.) It is the joining together of the dispersed of all Israel, those who had been forgotten. At the present time the Jews are the only ones known of Israel, but those will be the ten tribes. The Jews will have the certainty that they are Jews and yet will not know them. They have been hidden away. But now Jehovah has lifted up His hand to the Gentiles, and He says, speaking of the Gentiles, "They shall bring thy sons in their arms." The very kings and queens would be their nursing fathers and mothers, and would bow down before them. "And thou shalt know that I am Jehovah; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Such will be the moral state of Israel in that day. They shall wait upon Jehovah and shall not be ashamed.

But further: they will have no reason to fear their enemies. The last verse shews that the same God who shews such incomparable mercy to Israel, shall beat down all those who had plundered them. "But thus saith Jehovah, Even the captive of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I Jehovah am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." (Ver. 25, 26.) It is the condign vengeance of God upon the enemies of Israel. Such is the future that Jehovah guarantees to Israel after the rejection of the Messiah. It is impossible, therefore, to apply this chapter to the return from the Babylonish captivity; it speaks of the far more complete ingathering at the end of this age. It is the new subject of Christ's rejection by His people, and of their gathering in after He has been made a light to the end of the earth. But when Zion might have thought herself entirely forgotten, Jehovah turns His hand upon these little ones, and puts down the nations of the earth, and either their kings and queens become the servants of Israel, or He makes an example of them in divine judgment.

CHAPTER L.

OUR last chapter set forth the vast change which turns on the substitution of Christ, the true servant of God, for Israel His servant publicly and responsibly but in truth the slave of His enemy. The new sin of the people ensued thereon, not idolatry, but rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, only consistent in their unbelief and opposition to God. They would none of Him or His law; they had followed heathen gods; they now refuse His anointed servant. But this leads in the wisdom of God to the immediate blessing of the Gentiles in the day of grace, as it also becomes in result the basis of the ultimate restoration of Israel and the joy of all the earth in the day of glory. The chapter accordingly sketches the whole sweep of God's ways from the rejection of Christ to the triumphs of the last days.

In chapter l. we are in presence of little more than a single point in that great circle of events; but is it not the centre and pivot of all? The humiliation of Jesus, the servant of Jehovah, but withal Jehovah Himself, their own Messiah, despised not of strangers merely, but of His own people! Deliverance and glory were sure in the end. But so was the shameful divorce of Israel meanwhile; so was the sale moreover of Israel. How was this? "Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away." (Ver. 1.) It was no churl who found his wretched pleasure in putting away the wife who displeased him; it was no selfish parent who relieved his own necessities at the expense of his children. And the proof of their rebellion appears in verses 2, 3: "Wherfore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ?

or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." His coming, His call was unheeded, though He had already since the days of Pharaoh proved what He was in the behalf of His people.

Did the Jews question this? Did they say to Jehovah, as the Gentiles by and by will to the King coming in glory, "When saw we thee," &c.? Here is His answer by anticipation: "Jehovah God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." Nor this only: "Jehovah God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." Jehovah had deigned to become a man on earth, and here to walk in obedience, owning God; and this Christianity alone fully explains; for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were most truly and equally Jehovah. And He who came thus to do the will of God as man here below, was, as we know, the Son, who, Himself God and Jehovah, could look up and say, "Jehovah God hath opened mine ear," &c.

It is not the same truth here as in Exodus xxi., where the Hebrew servant might have gone out free, but says, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free—and is brought to the door-post before the judges and has his ear bored through in sign of perpetual service. So did Christ the true servant and Lord of all: He too has pledged Himself to serve eternally. Again, it is not the same as Psalm xl., where "mine ears hast thou digged" is cited from the LXX. (so in Hebrews x.), as "a body hast thou prepared me." The boring of the ear found its answer in the Lord's willing subjection to death, in which He identified Himself with the need and interests of master, wife, and children. The digging of the ear was not after He became a servant but rather in order to it. Thus was He formed as it were to be a servant, a body fitted in which, though He were a Son, He learned obedience by the

things which He suffered. For indeed He did become a man and a servant in this world. Isaiah looks at a time intermediate—neither incarnation, nor death, but His path in life, wherein the opened ear marks lowly intelligent attention to His Father's will, as the closed ear is significant of disobedience or indifference to the communications of God.

But obedience (especially public service) in such a world as this could only be, to such a One as He, continual, and to us hardly conceivable, suffering. Hence the issue at once follows : “ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” How solemn the thought ; and what a picture of God in the presence of man ; His humiliation (which should have made Him infinitely more precious, as being the incomparable proof of His love) gave the desired occasion to man under Satan's leading to insult Him to the uttermost.

But still He goes on—yea, to death, the death of the cross. “ For the Lord Jehovah will help me ; therefore shall I not be confounded ; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me ? let us stand together : who is mine adversary ? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me ; who is he that shall condemn me ? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment ; the moth shall eat them up.” (Ver. 7—9.)

Thus the Lord challenges His foes and sees their ruin sealed in their momentary triumph over Him whom, if man slew, God raised again from the dead. Notice here what has been often pointed out, that the apostle Paul cites this passage in the close of Romans viii., and applies to the Christian what the Spirit here applies to Christ. It would be childish to deny its application to the Lord because of this ; but it is hardly less childish to overlook the precious intimation that the same Spirit applies to us now what He uttered then of God's vindication of Christ rejected. Such is the Christian's blessed and present privilege —association with Christ risen after God undertakes to glorify Him whom the Jews (and Gentiles) cast out.

The closing verses make this yet plainer and prove its importance. "Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay upon his God" (ver. 10), for thus we have distinguished most definitely the Christian from the future Jewish remnant. The mystery was yet hid in God. Christ magnified and delivered was revealed; our place, not then revealed, is now seen in Him risen and glorified. They on the contrary, walking in darkness and wanting light, will be called to trust in the Lord and stay on their God, when there is nothing else to lean on. But they will find a glorious deliverance when He appears. We are children of light now, children of day before it dawns upon the earth; we follow Him in spirit where He is, yea are brought to God and free of the holiest while here.

As for the apostate mass of the Jews, their portion plainly follows. "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Ver. 11.)

CHAPTERS LI., LII. 12.

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IN chapter I. we have seen the divine Messiah in the depths of humiliation, but the Lord Jehovah helping and justifying Him. In chapter liii. (which really begins at lii. 13) we shall see Him "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities," when Jehovah "laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Compare Psalms lxix., xxii.) Between these everlasting foundations of blessing for Israel (or for any), the Holy Spirit gives us awakening appeals of the utmost force, interest, and beauty. It is a complete whole, consisting of seven distinct parts (chap. li. 1—3; 4—6; 7, 8; then, 9—16; 17—23; lii. 1—10; lastly, 11, 12), and tracing the gradations of the godly Jewish remnant from their deep distress, fearing Jehovah and obeying the voice of His servant, though in darkness as yet, and having no light, but gradually advancing till they stand in the full glory that was promised them.

The first remark to be made is one of no small importance as affecting the interpretation or rather application of this prophetic strain. It is not under the head of Babylon, but of a rejected Messiah. And in fact the attempt to apply to their state after the return from Babylon either the calls of righteousness to them, or the calls of the Spirit in them, or the final word as a priest to Jehovah abandoning their old seats of impurity, is not worth a refutation—hardly a notice. Chapter xlviii. closed that part of the subject. Chapter xlix. opened the new complaint and ground of judgment God lays against His people—not idolatry judged by the captivity in Babylon, but the refusal of Christ, the ground of their dispersion and distresses under the fourth empire. Therefore was Israel divorced from Jehovah; but a remnant, poor in spirit, by grace obey the voice of His humbled servant. Their moral restoration and final triumph are here brought before us in as orderly a way as is compatible with the sublimest of prophets.

The first appeal to hear (ver. 1—3) is to them as following after righteousness and seeking Jehovah. Such will be few indeed at first. They may feel themselves alone, the mass of Israel being apostate like the Gentiles. But they are exhorted to look to Abraham and Sarah. “For I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” Then faith must count on no less but more manifest blessing, after all their sorrow now at its worst. “For Jehovah shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Jehovah; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” (Ver. 3.)

The next (ver. 4—6) goes farther and calls them Jehovah’s people and His nation: “Hearken,” &c. [the word is a different one from that more general term in ver. 1, 7, and implies attention.] It is a total mistake in Bishop Lowth to think the address in this case is made not to the Jews but to the Gentiles, “as in all reason it ought to be!” It was the more required as a comfort for the Jews, because they have been so long called Lo-ammi. (Compare Hosea i, ii.) The peoples are distinguished, for whose light His judgments should rest, as His arms should judge them, while His righteousness and salvation established for ever should be the portion of Israel.

The third (ver. 7, 8) calls them to hear, as knowing righteousness and having Jehovah’s law in their hearts. Why should such fear the reproach and revilings of men whom the moth and the worm, little and feeble as they are, should devour?

Similarly the Spirit now answers, as it were in the remnant. First (ver. 9—16) they call for the power of Jehovah to assert itself against their mighty foes, as of old against proud Egypt. “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Ver. 9, 10.) They predict their

deliverance in verse 11, and Jehovah's reply to their trembling hearts in terms as full of pathos as of grandeur in verses 12—16.

Next (ver. 17—23), the Spirit of God summons Jerusalem to arise and stand up, with a most vivid description of her reeling under Jehovah's judgment without one of her sons to guide or help, and of His taking the cup from her hand, not here to drink it Himself, but to put it into the hands of their oppressors.

Then, thirdly (chap. lii. 1—10), Zion is called to awake and put on strength: "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." The days of Egypt and of Assyria should never return: no more should the uncircumcised and the unclean come there. Beautiful then in their eyes, as in His, are the feet of him that brings good tidings and publishes peace. Before (chap. xl.), the cities of Judah were told, "Behold your God." Now Zion hears, "Thy God reigneth!" The watchmen lift up their voice, singing, not warning; the very wastes of Jerusalem, so long forsaken, sing together in their irrepressible joy. "For Jehovah hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. Jehovah hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Ver. 9, 10.)

Lastly, the strain closes with the peremptory call to act consistently with the holiness of Jehovah and of His sanctuary. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of Jehovah." It should not be, as of old, in hurry and anxiety, however guided and delivered even then. But the greatest triumphs of their fathers fade in the glorious intervention of Jehovah which the children now know. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for Jehovah will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward." (Ver. 12.) It is in truth and in its fullest display the day of the Lord when Israel for ever leave the unclean Gentiles, henceforth to be a richer blessing to them than their evils had been a snare and ruin to Israel.

CHAPTERS LII. 13, LIII.

THIS section is complete in itself, though it assumes the truth already before us in chapter l., pursues it farther and more profoundly, and thus completes the foundation of all that follows.

The elder Jewish interpreters did not contest the application to the Messiah. Thus Jonathan Ben Uzziel expressly speaks to this effect in the Chaldee paraphrase (given in the Antwerp, Paris, and London Polyglotts). So the Talmud Babyl. (in Tr. Sanhedrim, cap. helek, fol. 98) applies to the Messiah in liii. 4. Again, the book of Zohar confirms this in the comment on Exodus (fol. 95, col. 3), and the Mechilta (according to the Jalkut Shimoni, part ii. fol. 90, col. 1) is no less distinct, as even Aben Ezra, Abarbanel, and other distinguished men among their later authors confess. I am indebted to another who has supplied some of these references for the striking fact that even now, in the prayers of the synagogue used universally, there is the clearest witness to the same truth. For instance, at the Passover they pray in these terms: "Hasten and cause the shadows to flee away. Let him be exalted and extolled and be high, who is now despised. Let him deal prudently and reprove and sprinkle many nations." Again, in the prayers for the day of Atonement, there is as plain an allusion to the righteous Anointed bearing the yoke of iniquities and transgression, wounded because of it, and men (or Israel at least) healed by His wound. The translator (D. Levi) tries to turn part of the prayer aside to Josiah, as do some of the Rabbis; but the prayer expressly alludes to the Messiah in one of these references to Isaiah liii. just cited even according to the same person.

The more modern writers, who dread the ancient application of their fathers, have invented a double means of escape, either by some distinguished man like Josiah or Jeremiah, or by the Jewish people elsewhere styled "my servant" in the prophecy.

But in vain. This section is so punctually and exclusively applicable to our Lord that these efforts only prove the will of unbelief and its failure. We have seen already in the beginning of chapter xlix. Christ, the servant, substituted for Israel who had been altogether wanting. We have seen in chapter l. that the godly Jews are exhorted to obey the voice of this servant of Jehovah, humbled though He has been among men, but vindicated of God.

The three closing verses of lii. open the new and full view of Messiah suffering and exalted in connection with Israel; for this last qualification needs to be borne in mind lest man should look for that which it is no part of the Spirit's work here to reveal. The union of Jew and Gentile in one body, as well as Christ head over all things to it, His church, is, as the apostle tells us, a mystery, that is, a secret not revealed in Old Testament times. Many points true of the church and the Christian are revealed in this prophecy as in others; but that heavenly union nowhere until His rejection, and not fully till the apostle was entrusted with the administration of it.

The exalted Messiah of Israel is then before us, who erst was covered with shame and bent to such humiliation as was never before nor since the portion of the sons of men. Hence many were dumb through astonishment, or rather perhaps abhorrence—"shocked" at Him: they had looked for Messiah far otherwise. His lowly mien and surroundings of life and labours first disappointed; His meek acceptance of insult and suffering drew out all their malice and aversion. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." The Septuagint translates, "So shall many nations regard him with admiration," that is, it would seem, in contrast with Jewish vexation and hatred; but this supposes a different verb in their Hebrew copies, though differing only very slightly in form. Some of the ablest Jewish critics take it as meaning that He will drop the word, and so teach if not refresh many Gentiles. Certainly what is said of kings implies a reverent and subject silence before Him. Thus I consider that verse 15 stands in antithesis to verse 14: the one presenting the bitter unbelieving disappointment of

the chosen, the other the beneficent dealing with the Gentiles, so that their kings are mute with awe in His presence, which accordingly cannot, save generally, apply at this time, but joins on the effects of His advent in glory, in contrast with the days of His flesh, in verse 14, and in unison with the opening words of verse 13. The apostle only uses the principle of the last words for *his own*, going out with the gospel where no other had preceded, and no sound of Christ might have yet reached; but he in no way treats this as the fulfilment of that oracle.

"Behold" (says God now through His prophet), "my servant shall deal prudently [rather prosper], he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle* many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." (Ver. 13—15.) What can be less congruous than the facts of Josiah, Jeremiah, or the Jewish people? Neither the king nor the prophet had any such destiny as could be fairly brought into this remarkable contrast of, first, deep shame, then wide and lofty glory before subject nations and kings. And though it is true, as we have often noticed, that "my servant" sometimes applies to Israel in this prophet, there are always definite contextual marks which render the decision by no means difficult or doubtful. This is made evident and certain from chapter liii., where there is the most obvious distinction between the individual in question and the people who esteemed Him not, though He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows, yea, was wounded for their transgressions, and brought healing to them by His stripes

* This phrase has tormented the critics. The Fathers in general apply it to the spiritual work of Christianity; the ancient Jews for the most part to the judicial effect of Messiah's kingdom in dispersing or casting away the Gentiles. Some of the old versions took the word as expressive of amazement. Gesenius (in his Thes.) comes pretty much to the same thing, considering the word to mean the effect in starting from their seats those who suddenly see some great personage when it was least expected.

when bruised for their iniquities. To identify this suffering One with the people from whom and for whom He thus suffered, and to whom He afterwards brings such signal blessing, is the grossest confusion on the face of the matter.

But let us turn to the wondrous words of our God from these strange vagaries of men. Chapter liii. opens with the confession and implied complaint of the unbelief of men, yea, of their own unbelief; for Israel, now broken down in sense of sin, acknowledge that it was not merely those without who heeded little the report of the Messiah; but that they too themselves had been hard and rebellious against Him. “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of Jehovah revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Ver. 1—6.)

The close of the last chapter (ver. 13—15) gave us Jehovah’s contemplation of His Anointed, once put to shame, and now on the summit of glory before every eye. Then His people trace, in view of Him, their past and most guilty blindness, as they think of His wondrous humiliation, their misjudgment of His life and death, and their present perception of its cause in their sin and misery from which He had come to save them. When they had of old beheld His path of shame and sufferings from first to last, they understood neither the grace which brought Him down so low nor the glories that should follow.

But now (verses 4—6) they are taught of God, and avow before Him and men that underneath all that humiliation, and,

as they wrongly thought, personal obnoxiousness to His judgment, a deeper work was being done: first, the deepest identification of their burden on His own heart, as He went up and down the land of sorrow (ver. 3), and finally atonement. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Ver. 5, 6.) They had regarded Him, on the contrary, as an object of God's displeasure, and justly cast out and trampled on. (Ver. 3.) But it was a misconception of all His marvellous grace, and an oversight of their own deep necessities, both in the life that now is, and yet more for that which is to come. Hence Matt. viii. 17 justly applies the first part of ver. 4 to the Lord, as He relieved the afflictions of the Jews, and healed their diseases in His ministry, never merely bringing in bare power, but bearing all in spirit before God, while He cured them; as 1 Peter ii. 24, 25 applies verse 5 to His work for our sins on the cross. This opens the mouth in lowly confession of sin; as the heart can then feel its past evil way, and each judges himself before God.

In verses 7—9 Jehovah expresses His delight in the moral beauty which shone in the suffering One, affirms on His part the explanation of the enigma of the cross, though up to His death and burial man was allowed his way in disposing of Jesus. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: * because he had done no violence, neither was any

* The phrase used here is most expressive, יְמִתָּה, and points to the intensive and exceptional death of the Holy Sufferer, as concentrating many—countless—deaths in that one. Henderson takes the phrase to mean "after his death."

deceit in his mouth." (Ver. 7—9.) The plague-stroke was upon Him for the transgression of the people of Jehovah. It was not the outward fact simply of a rejected Messiah to which He was pleased to submit, the awful proof of man's and Israel's moral state; but there is this divine key, and the far more wondrous meeting of a more hidden and a deeper need, even expiation.

Israel then reiterate the blessed truth with their Amen, pursuing the glorious consequences as far as it is theirs to see them. "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand." (Ver. 10.) Here it is the atoning work, and the suffering of the Lord is dwelt on, and its aspect as the all-efficacious offering for sin. It is blessedly true that the death and blood-shedding of the Saviour must be for propitiation; but it is as false a thought as the enemy of souls ever insinuated that this propitiation or atonement is or could be according to God and His word without His sufferings specifically, yea that suffering which was the deepest expression of God's judgment of our iniquities when He who knew no sin was made sin for us and forsaken of God. His blood and death when viewed as expiatory and not as the evidence simply of man's wickedness, are the blood and death of Him who really bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and endured the to us unfathomable judgment of God, when not the Jews only but God hid His face from Him. Can a Christian slight this divine abandonment of Him who suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God? He may, but only as he may be guilty of grievous, not to say fatal error.*

* I am aware that Jesuit preachers are wont to draw moving pictures, as of the physical torments of the lost, so of the external sufferings of our blessed Lord (*i.e.*, the human rather than divine side). Nor do I deny the substantial truth of what they allege, but only their use of it to the exclusion of other truths, yet more weighty. Their reason is obvious. Unspiritual themselves, they appeal to that which strikes the senses and can excite the feelings or the fears of their least spiritual auditors. But men of a different stamp have always recognised that the word of God reveals a far deeper truth, not of what

The chapter closes with Jehovah's confirmation, repeating the glorious results of both grace and government, and in each case connecting them with the work of salvation. "From the trouble of his soul shall he see and be satisfied: through his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in

was before the eye or by the hand of man merely, but of what passed unseen between God and Christ in that awful hour. So, to take an instance from one of the better sort, Archbishop Leighton rightly distinguishes this: "In that outside of His suffering, the visible kind of death inflicted on Him, that it was hanging on the tree of the cross, there was an analogy with the end and main work which was ordered by the Lord with regard unto that, being a death declared accursed by the law, as the Apostle Paul observes, and so declaring Him that was God blessed for ever to have been made a curse, that is, accounted as accursed for us, that we might be blessed in Him, 'in whom,' according to the promise, 'all the nations of the earth are blessed.'

"But that wherein lay the strength and main stress of His sufferings was this invisible weight that none could see that gazed on Him; but He felt more than all the rest. In this are three things. 1. The weight of sin. 2. The transferring of it upon Christ. 3. His bearing of it.

"1. He bare sin as a heavy burden: so the word of bearing in general, ἀνήνεγκεν, and those two words, particularly used by the prophet to which these allude, נָשׁוּבְנָשׁוּב are the bearing of some great mass or load, and that sin is. For it hath the wrath of an offended God hanging on it, indissolubly tied to it; of which who can bear the least? Yea, to consider in the present subject where we may best read what it is, it was a heavy load to Christ, where the psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ, complains heavily, 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about. Mine iniquities' (not His, as done by Him, but yet His by His undertaking to pay for them) they 'have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart faileth me.' And sure that which pressed *Him* so sore, who upholds heaven and earth, no other in heaven or earth could have sustained or surmounted, but would have sunk or perished under it. Was it, think you, the pain of that common outside of His death, though very painful, that drew such a word from Him, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Or was it the fear of it beforehand, that pressed a sweat of blood from Him? No, it was this burden of sin, the first of which was committed in the garden of Eden, that then began to be laid upon Him, and fastened upon His shoulders in the garden of Gethsemane, ten thousand times heavier than the cross which He was caused to bear: that might be for a while turned over to another, but this could not. This was the cup He trembled more at, than that gall and vinegar after to be offered Him by His crucifiers, or any other part of His external sufferings. It was the bitter cup of wrath due to sin that His Father put into His hand and caused Him to drink, the very same thing that is here called the 'bearing our sins in his body.' . . . Jesus Christ is both the

righteousness ; and he shall bear their iniquities." Such seems the simple, true, and exact sense of the verse which has been lost sight of very often by translators, and still more by preachers, as well as through a different influence by Jews. There is no need of imparting an evangelical phrase, which really misleads "by the knowledge of himself."* The broad facts in the Lord's history are before us: His ministry, when through His knowledge He instructed many in righteousness ; His death, when He bore their iniquities on the tree. The order is quite clear and sound ; and there is no need for taking the copulative in a causal sense, or in any other than its own strict meaning. It was thus the Lord taught on the mount as well as in other places and times during His sojourn on earth. Then came another and mightier work which could be shared by none. Others might suffer in love or in righteousness ; He not merely in both, but He alone for the sins of others at God's

great high priest and the great sacrifice in one. And this seems to be here implied in these words, 'Himself bare our sins in his own body ;' which the legal priest did not : so 'He made his soul an offering for sin.' He offered up Himself, His whole self. In the history of the gospel, it is said, His soul was heavy and chiefly suffered ; but the bearing in His body and offering it, that is oftenest mentioned as the visible part of the sacrifice, and in His way of offering it, not excluding the other. Thus we are exhorted to give our bodies in opposition to the bodies of beasts, and they are therefore called a living sacrifice, which they are not without the soul. Thus His bearing in His body imports the bearing in His soul too."—*The Works of R. Leighton*, Jerment's edition, 1805. Vol. i., pp. 370—376.

I may add that this was a point of objection by Cardinal Bellarmine to Calvin, who maintained the same doctrine as is carp'd at now-a-days, and not merely by rationalist speculators, such as Mr. Maurice and his friends. It seems to me a peculiar mind which could cite 1 Peter iii. 18 in a paragraph designed to prove that reconciliation or atonement is never in connection with Christ's sufferings specifically. It is false that the statement they oppose separates His sufferings from His blood and death : on the contrary, while distinguishing for other points, the object was to insist on the inseparableness of His sufferings with His blood and death for atonement. The admission that they are *not* separated in the Spirit's mind for atonement is my thesis, which is yielded ; but it is wrong to say, "the two are never separated." It is merely inattention to scripture and claims no answer.

* Even Dr. Henderson, who is often free enough from popular prejudice, gives this.

hand, as we were expressly told in the verse before. But the Spirit never tires of the wondrous fact, and loves to present it on all sides, from God to man, and from man to God. Dan. xii. 3 proves irrefutably that the Hebrew will bear the sense of instruct in righteousness as well as justify: which of the two depends on the contextual necessity. There indeed it *must* mean the former; for, first, teachers cannot "justify" in the forensic sense (which is the true doctrinal force of the word, when thus employed as to the soul of a believer); and, secondly, as it is there a question of *the many* (the apostate mass of the Jews, which is the technical value of סְבָרָה in Daniel), it must mean "instruct in" rather than "bring to righteousness," for they do not bring them. Hence I doubt not it means similarly in this place, though it be here "many," not "*the* many," as there. But souls need more than instruction, were it ever so perfect, as the Lord's surely must be. Hence it is added, "And he shall bear their iniquities." He suffers for them according to the scriptures. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The notion of the later Jews, represented by Dr. Philippson for instance, that it is Jacob as a whole, is a mere subterfuge that Israel's sufferings conduce to the happiness of the nations. "They are become the martyrs of the acknowledgment of the ONE, and by their exaltation the nations will be directed with the strength of conviction to the sole and only God. This view of the prophet is truly sublime. . . . The doubts, therefore, which the Jewish commentators (Redak and Abarbanel) have raised here, that this procedure would be opposed to the justice of God, which must allow every one to bear the punishment of what he has himself committed, can only be applied to individuals, while the prophet had in view the whole development of mankind." Now the fact is admitted, even by the Rabbis who brought in this idea, that the ancient Jews referred the suffering but righteous servant of this passage

to the Messiah, and this not of some but of the elders with one mouth. However I do not cite any such confessions as authorities in the least, but scripture only. Here all is light. The "we" of this section, as elsewhere, is unquestionably Jewish, not Gentile; as unquestionably distinct from the One whose position and relation to God they confess they had so fatally misconceived. To understand the "we" of the Gentiles is an impossibility; to take both "we" and "he" as Israel, or the prophetic body, is too absurd and self-contradictory. "He" is a real individual who suffers from Israel, instead of being the same. The interchange of tenses is no more difficult here than elsewhere. It is habitual with the prophets, and with Isaiah no less than others. That Israel was viewed as the servant is true; and Israel failed as such; then comes Messiah the Servant, who glorifies God, yet suffers and dies, but, as here we learn, it was for Israel, though not for Israel only; and then Israel sifted and repentant, and believing in Him, are viewed in consequence as servants for His glory by and by. Such is the scope of these later chapters of Isaiah.

But the idea of Israel being here meant by the suffering One is false morally as exegetically. For it supposes that the Gentiles will yet acknowledge that Israel had to bear this hard fate solely for their redemption out of their sinful state (4—6), so that Israel through the patience which they exhibit notwithstanding all their sufferings, since they never departed from the only God, shall be placed on a yet higher eminence (7—9). Assuredly the Gentiles will yet confess their sins, not only their sins against God, but their cruel persecution and jealousy and envy of Israel. Assuredly they will yet trust with the trust that is alas! yet to be, but is not yet, Israel's. But a more flagrant mistake was never made than that Israel can take the ground of unswerving righteousness like the suffering Messiah here. Take alone the very first chapter of Isaiah: is not this Israel suffering; but is it for righteousness? Is it not for their own appalling sins? And if it be said that such they were of old, but that all is changed when we arrive at a later day, such as Isa. liii., I answer let them see their divinely painted portrait in

its neighbourhood, in Isa. lvii.—lix., and let them say where is the conscience which can so trifle with the word of God and the facts of their own hearts and ways.

No: reading Isa. liii. we find ourselves in the midst of sacrificial imagery, of atonement for sin, of intercession for sinners; and these sins are pre-eminently Israel's, as will be the blessedness. I heartily admit this last, and rejoice and give God thanks for the grace He will yet extend to His ancient people. But that grace will partly prove its genuineness by the confession of their own sins, above all against their own Messiah, not in self-righteousness pretending to have been a suffering Messiah themselves for the Gentiles. There is indeed vicarious suffering here, a holy substitute atoning for the guilty before God; but it is Messiah for Israel expressly, though, not exclusively; not in the most distant hint of it Israel suffering for the Gentiles. They suffered from them far, far too much; but they will never suffer for them; but the only spotless Lamb of God, Immanuel, died for that nation, for Israel, though—thanks be to God—for us also. Worthily therefore is He now exalted, and we are in living union with Him who sits on the throne of God. This however is not the point here, but His exaltation over the earth and the nations when Israel come to own their sins in the recognition of their suffering but then glorified Messiah.

CHAPTERS LIV., LV.

How beautifully seasonable is the voice of the Spirit calling on Jerusalem to sing, after His own clear and full prediction of Messiah rejected of Israel and bruised of Jehovah in atonement! Indeed the last section of the prophecy gave us a most striking and instructive rehearsal or dialogue between God and His people, about Messiah, His sufferings and the glories that should follow. Fitly therefore follows the invitation to her who had sorrowed so long and so justly now to rejoice because of her new blessing in His grace.

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah.” (Ver. 1.)

Never ought it to have been a question who is meant. As usual, however, the commentators have confused what is plain and agreed in scarce anything but departure from the true sense and aim. The occasion of stumbling they have in general found, partly in their habit of excluding the Jews from the prophets and so judaising the Christians (limiting themselves to the past and present, without taking in the future), partly from a misunderstanding of Galatians iv. 27, through mixing it up with the “allegory” of Sarah and Hagar. But who does not see that the citation of the prophet connects itself rather with Jerusalem which is above, in contrast with Jerusalem which then was? When the prophecy is fulfilled in the millennial day, God will count those who now believe to be Jerusalem’s children, as well as the race to come in that day. Doubly thus it will be verified that more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife. For what fruit of the most flourishing times, say under David or Solomon, could compare with the gathering in of the Christian saints since the Jews lost their place as the recognized witness and wife of Jehovah, or,

again, with the vast progeny which Jehovah will give her after her long desolation, when His reign shall be displayed over the earth ? Consult chapters xlix. 13—23 ; lx. 8, 9.

It is important to see, on the one hand, that though it is according to scripture to regard Christians mystically as the children of desolate Jerusalem far outnumbering those of her married estate of old, the church, on the other hand, is not yet presented by God's word as in the relationship of the wife either desolate or married.

The bride, the Lamb's wife, will not have made herself ready till she has been caught up to heaven glorified, and the harlot Babylon, the anti-church, has been judged of Jehovah God. The real position of the church meanwhile is that of one espoused ; her responsibility is to keep herself as a chaste virgin for Christ. The marriage will be in heaven, just before the Lord and His glorified saints appear for the destruction of the Antichrist and all his allies. (Comp. Rev. xix.)

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the Jews, or Zion if you will, had the place of nearness to Jehovah, which is represented under the figure of the marriage-tie, that she had been faithless and played the whore with many lovers (even the idols of the Gentiles), and that in consequence she was divorced, she became a widow and desolate under the righteous dealing of God. No one in the least familiar with the prophets can have failed to notice this and more said of Israel. Then it was she became barren and did not bear. Praise is still silent for God in Zion ; but the vow shall yet be performed to Him ; and the barren one shall sing and be no more barren but bear, astonished to find during those days of literal barrenness such an abundant offspring in the saints glorified on high, whom grace has been the while actively bringing in.

Nor is this all. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations ; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." (Ver. 2, 3.) The land, the earth, must be filled

with a suited seed ; for Jehovah shall be king over all the earth : in that day shall there be one Jehovah and His name one. Yea, Jehovah deigns to be the husband of Zion, not now a testimony and display of responsibility of man under law, but in the efficacy of grace when glorying is no more in the flesh but in Jehovah. “ Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband ; Jehovah of hosts is His name ; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For Jehovah hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.” (Ver. 4—6.)

Thus, and thus only, our chapter flows in its own proper channel : the exclusion of Israel by and by, and the appropriation of it to the church as its intended scope, produce nothing but violence and confusion. It is not true that God has forsaken the church ; even for a small moment, nor that in a little wrath He hides His face for an instant from the Christian. Of the Jew as such it is precisely the fact : as surely will He gather His ancient people in His mercy for ever. “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth : so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee.” (Ver. 7—10.)

No doubt the application to the Maccabean epoch falls infinitely short of the terms of blessing, and indeed casts no small slight on the character of the word of God. But this is the fault, not of scripture, but of its misreaders. A people are in question who, having once stood in full favour and near

relationship to Jehovah, forfeited it for a season, and finally are restored more than ever and for ever. There is but one such people : impossible that God should fail to have mercy on Israel.

"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah ; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear : and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me : whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work ; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is of me, saith Jehovah." (Ver. 11—17.) Thus it is not everlasting mercy alone reinstating the ancient people, but along with it images of beauty and glory with which Jehovah will adorn them. Truth will be theirs, for they all shall be taught of Jehovah ; peace too, great peace, shall be enjoyed ; and, established in righteousness, they shall be far from oppression and fear, though not from hostile intention (as we know from Ezekiel xxxviii. xxxix.) at the beginning of the millennium and (from Revelation xx. 7—9) at the end. But Israel will have hoped in Jehovah, and not in vain : for with Jehovah is mercy, and with Him plenteous redemption.

Chapter lv. does not, after these remarks, call for many words. Its connection with what goes before is plain and makes its own bearing evident. The call is to Israel, but in such largeness of language as to warrant an aspect to the Gentiles. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea come, buy wine

and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." (Ver. 1—4.) Here plainly some outstanding One is referred to, as to whom no believer need hesitate. It is the Lord Jesus, but in relation to Israel (ver. 3), and withal a witness and commander to the nations (ver. 4). The thoughtful mind—at least taught of God—will not overlook the divine application of verse 3 to the resurrection of our Lord, contradistinguished from the use of Psalm ii. 7, in Acts xiii. 33, 34. His resurrection is both the security for the accomplishment of what was promised to Israel and the occasion for the outflow of the grace which calls and shall yet call Gentiles into a share of God's blessing and of the knowledge of Himself. Before death and resurrection, though He could never deny His deeper glory or His grace to the faith that saw either, He was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Crucified and risen, He is the attractive object for all indiscriminately. And the spirit of this wide grace breathes fragrantly through this chapter : "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel ; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh

it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Ver. 5—13.)

CHAPTERS LVI., LVII.

THE two chapters before us carry on the same line of truth we have seen since the rejection and atoning death of Christ came distinctly into view, and pursue the consequences of that infinite fact. As far as a natural division goes, I should be disposed to close the first subject treated in them with verse 8 of chapter lvi., and then to take from verse 9 to the end of chapter lvii. as completing not the second only but the entire section, which began with chapter xl ix. According to this we should have here, first, the ways of Jehovah founded on the Messiah's death for sin in respect of the godly, even outside Israel; and, secondly, His ways, when He was displeased with the ungodly, not merely outside but in the midst of Israel. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.

Some have drawn from the Lord's citation of a clause of this section, that He intimates its then approaching accomplishment in the Christian church. Now I do not deny that we have broad moral principles, as of grace on God's part in Isaiah lv., so in its flowing out to the Gentiles in Isaiah lvi., which are now realized in the gospel and the church, even more fully than anything here developed. But we ought not to overlook the fact that neither in Matthew nor in Luke is the Lord represented as quoting the reference to all the nations: an omission the more notable inasmuch as in both these Gospels, above all others though in each for a special reason, we have more respecting the change of dispensation then at hand, and the call of grace going out to the Gentiles than anywhere else. I cannot but gather thence, that, though in fact as the full citation in Mark shows, the Lord did quote the words of our prophet without abridgment, yet this marked exclusion of "all nations" in the two Gospels which most insist on the change from Israel to the Gentiles, is meant to intimate that no such application was then in His mind, but simply the gross perversion of Jehovah's house

of prayer into a den of robbers before His eyes, even as Jeremiah reproached the Jews of his day. There is nothing therefore, if this be correct, to turn aside the fulfilment of this blessed fruit of the cross from the future, however large the terms may be, and this not without purpose on God's part.

The chapter then opens not with a call to sinners, as such, to repent and believe the gospel; but to the people of God to keep judgment and do justice, though the reason assigned is in no way the law given by Moses, but "my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." When the apostle unfolds the glad tidings, he says that God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel; that it is manifested apart from law. Clearly this goes farther. Salvation *is* come, as we find in Ephesians ii., "For by grace *are ye* saved through faith;" though, in view of our resurrection and glory, we as truly say that it is nearer than when we believed. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The righteousness is established and we are justified in virtue of this already; but we await through the Spirit the hope, the glorious issue, proper to that righteousness, when even in the body we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son: "whom he justified, them he also glorified." But this is the language of the New Testament apostle, not of our Old Testament prophet, who is occupied with the earthly people and their hopes, but in God-given terms of such comprehensiveness as to justify the largest ways of grace. "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it," &c. The following verse (3) is even more express: the most distant, "the son of the stranger," and the most desperate, "the eunuch," were not beyond the reach of God's merciful and mighty blessing. And this is repeated in the most forcible language as to both classes in the subsequent verses 4—7, concluding with the expression of Jehovah's mind to be known and read of all men, that His "house should be called an house of prayer for all people." "Jehovah God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him." (Ver. 8.)

The second part (from lvi. 9 to lvii. 21) stands out in startling contrast at first sight, but it flows, I doubt not, from the same principle. The grace which goes forth ever so actively to the most miserable is of all things the most intolerant of evil; and its dealing is ever most delicate and jealous with those that are near enough to be so much the more responsible to reflect Jehovah brightly.

The Gentile oppressors are first invited to lay waste. (Ver. 9.) Those who ought to have watched and tended the beautiful flock of Jehovah not only slept, but they awoke to their own greed of gain and love of present ease, as indifferent about God as about His people. (Ver. 10—12.) On the other hand the Shepherd of Israel neither slumbered nor slept, and if the righteous perished without a soul's laying it to heart, it was but His hand after all taking the righteous away from the evil to come. (Chap. lvii. 1, 2.)

Next, the prophet under various figures of uncleanness arraigns the idolatrous Jews. (Ver. 3 *et seqq.*) The sketch is most energetic, and the general scope is plain. The only allusion which strikes me as calling for particular notice is found in verse 9, "And thou wentest to the king with ointment." This will be the climax of their heartless desertion of Jehovah, and rejection of the Messiah. They received not Him who came in His Father's name; they will receive another who is to come in his own name. The spirit of this has been often verified, doubtless; but it awaits its full final signature in the Antichrist of the last days. He is "the king," as abruptly (but so much the more strikingly) brought in here as in Daniel xi. 36—40. Unbelief as blindly acquiesces in the false and evil, as it ignores the truth and hates righteousness and grace. "The king" is not "the woman," "the great whore," but rather what works the destruction of Babylon, though only the more audaciously opposed to God and the Lamb. The Jew will play a solemn part during this last struggle in the end of the age. The king will be in the land and city destined for the Messiah; the centre of the Babylonish system is the great city of the west, Rome: but God will destroy the one, and the Lamb vanquish the other.

In the midst of this harrowing description of coming wickedness and woe, Jehovah contrasts with the hopeless destruction of the apostate Jews him that trusts in Himself as destined to possess the land (so long the prey of one usurping stranger after another) and to inherit His holy mountain (even to this day the boasted spoil of the infidel). "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him." (Ver. 14—18.) "Except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake they shall be shortened." Yea, Jehovah will heal, lead, and comfort. He creates thankful praise. Peace is His word, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near; but as for the wicked, like the troubled sea that casts up mire and dirt, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Let the Jew take heed. Certainly the wicked of that people shall not escape.

CHAPTERS LVIII., LIX.

To these chapters one might add chapter lx. as completing this series. It is the opening of the last section of the prophecy. (Chap. lviii.—lxvi.) The Spirit had closed both His counts against God's ancient people, their idolatry, and their rejection of the Messiah, with the consequences in the certainty of judgment, and not peace, for the wicked on either side. We have now a sort of appendix, consisting of moral argument and appeal to the people, with a positive revelation of Jehovah's intervention and their establishment in glory and blessing. For no prophecy of scripture is of isolated interpretation, but links itself with the kingdom of Jehovah in the last days, however it may apply to lesser and passing circumstances in the prophetic days, or the times that succeeded. Prophetic scripture does not interpret itself apart from that grand system; though verified from day to day, it looks onward to the final scenes connecting what wrought in the past with the state of things which will necessitate Jehovah's appearance on the scene to introduce His own day.

The notion of some* that Protestantism is in question is as unfounded as the unbelief of an older day which turned aside the prophecy from Israel, because no part of the blessing has as yet been accomplished in them as a nation. The quotation of the prophecy, as employed by the apostle in Romans xi., appears to me to refute both, by giving us as the divine key the future salvation of that Israel which is now for the most blinded and has stumbled at the stumbling stone. The time too is rendered certain; it is unquestionably not present any more than past, but future. For, as the Spirit there interprets the prophecy, we are not to look for its fulfilment in the salvation of all Israel (chap. lix. 12), till after the fulness of the Gentiles is come in,

* Vitringa, Horsley, and Fry in modern times.

whereas this is only going on now and not therefore complete. Hence the moment is not arrived even for commencing to apply to Israel.

Jehovah then deals with the exceeding hypocrisy of this people in their holy things. It was not that they did not approach His temple, not only professing delight in His ordinances, but fasting and afflicting their souls. In vain! "Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness." (Ver. 1—4.) Nothing of the kind could be acceptable to Jehovah, who will have truth in the inward parts, and things fair and good in the sight of all men. Hollow and sterile religiousness is abominable in His eyes; for such religiousness compromises His name and compels Him to judge themselves if He cannot sanction their sin. Hence the expostulation in verses 5—7. Were there a response to His own goodness, in the practice of mercy which became the people of Jehovah to the oppressed and destitute, how would He not bless them! Were they to heed the sabbath, calling it a delight, and honouring Jehovah, how should they not delight themselves in Him, riding in the high places of the earth, and fed with the heritage of their father Jacob! (Ver. 8—14.)

For Jehovah's hand was not short, nor His ear heavy; it was their iniquities and sins which caused the breach. (Chap. lix. 1, 2.) And what a picture follows in verses 3—15! Hands and fingers, lips and tongues, all polluted and perverse; justice not called for; truth unpleaded; vanities and lies, mischief and iniquities; subtlety of evil and ever-increasing virulence; active but vain corruption and violence. What sanguinary feet! what iniquitous thoughts! What wasting and destruction in the crooked paths where peace is unknown! Hence, without judgment, they walk in darkness, grope like the blind, and are in desolate places as dead men, whether raging as bears or mourning as doves, salvation is far off, because of multiplied transgressions and departure from God, with truth fallen in the street, and equity unable to enter, and the

godly a prey, so that Jehovah was displeased that there was no judgment.

But such utter moral chaos, hopeless for man, was the call for Jehovah. "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence." (Ver. 16—18.) It is the picture of the mighty intervention of God for His people in the last days, though not at all resembling what He will do for the heavenly saints. These He will remove from the scene of their pilgrimage to heaven; His people He will deliver from their enemies by judgment. "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence." Thereby He will teach the nations wisdom, or at least the beginning of it. "So shall they fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah shall lift up a standard against him."

It is not, on the one hand, a mere outward interference, but the power of the Spirit will accompany it. On the other hand, it is not the action of the Spirit in the absence of Jehovah, as now in Christianity; for "the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah." The apostle (Rom. xi. 26) cites it, with the Seventy, as His coming out of Zion. Doubtless both are true and each appropriate in its place. He must come to that mountain of royalty in the Holy Land in order to come out thence; and He will come to the righteous remnant, the Israel of God, even to such as turn from transgression in Jacob, as He will also turn away ungodliness from Jacob. There will be conversion of heart before Jehovah appears in the extremity of their distress and to the destruction of their foes; but that appearing will deepen all

their feelings toward Himself and bring them into peace and blessing fully and for ever. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever." (Ver. 21.)

CHAPTER LX.

As we have had the failure and guilt of Israel in idolatry and the rejection of the Messiah, traced down to their reception of “the king” as well as idols in the last days, so now we have not a pledge or promise of covenanted blessing under the Redeemer-King, but the scene of joy and blessing and honour for Zion when the hour arrives for His glory to be revealed here below. There is no ground for doubting that, as before we had the dark picture of God’s earthly people, so here we are permitted to behold the sure anticipation of the brightness in store for them.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Jehovah shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of Jehovah. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaoth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as a dove to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of Jehovah thy God, and to the

Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." (Ver. 1—9.)

There is no question here of God's glory revealed in the face of Christ on high and made known by the Spirit to the heart; the earth itself is the theatre of this divine display. Another point to be noticed is, that, immediately before the time arrives, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples. Plainly therefore it is a false interpretation of prophecy that light is to be diffused universally when the time of earthly glory for Israel, as well as heavenly glory for the church, dawns on the world. Zion is to be visited in the mercy of God, when the Gentile lands are enveloped in the grossest ignorance of God. (Verses 1, 2.)

Again, there is a point of striking contradistinction to the present dealings of God in verse 3. For now the fall of the Jews has been the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; but here all is in contrast, as indeed Romans xi. also teaches us that their reception shall be to the world life from the dead. So here, when Jehovah's glory shall be seen on Zion, Gentiles shall come to that light and kings to the brightness of its rising.

The gospel goes out, its light is diffused far and wide, though only as a testimony; for it admits not of the power which binds Satan and changes the face of creation. But in our chapter Jerusalem has its proper central place, as the metropolis of the earth when all shall be settled and governed according to God. (Ver. 4.) Nor is it only sons and daughters that thus come to Zion from far, but strangers too. For there is then to be no such state of things on earth as the church of God, one body, Christ's body. On the contrary, Gentiles and Israel, though blessed by Jehovah, will be distinct and kept so, however harmonious. So, too, it is the day when outward things are to be no unmeet offering to Jehovah: camels and dromedaries, flocks and herds, land and sea, shall pour their tribute before His feet. To think of serving God thus now would be to go back to beggarly elements from the revelation of heavenly and eternal things in Christ; whereas gold and incense will be

in season, and sacrifices will be then acceptable for His altar and the house of His glory. But no such joy shall be for the isles and the nations and creation generally till the Holy One of Israel glorifies Zion, rescuing her from the stranger that now treads her down to her sorrow and their own loss. But He shall arise and have mercy on that royal hill, and His servants take pleasure in her stones and favour her dust. Not till then shall the heathen fear His name, and the kings of the earth His glory.

But when Jehovah builds up Zion, all shall be turned. "And the sons of the strangers shall build up the walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee." (Ver. 10.) God will make this felt universally in due time, after punishing those who think to gain all by the overthrow of His people. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I Jehovah am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be

no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but Jehovah shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Ver. 11—20.)

Here is evidence overwhelming, were more wanted, that the church on earth or in heaven is not in question, but the ancient people of God blessed according to His promise and prophecy. For righteousness dealing according to an earthly measure is the rule; and it is the day also not for an elect witness, but "thy people shall be all righteousness," and this in prosperous power, instead of knowing the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable to His death. "They shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I Jehovah will hasten it in his time." (Ver. 21, 22.)

CHAPTERS LXI., LXII.

THIS forms the beginning of a section (chaps. lxi.—lxiii. 1—6) which embraces Jehovah-Messiah in His first advent as well as His second for the blessing and glory of Israel and the destruction of their enemies. We have the Lord's own warrant in Luke iv. for declaring that the early portion He read applies to His then presence in grace here below. It has been often and justly observed how He stopped after the first clause of verse 2, closing the book, and in due time saying, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. He cites what portrays His character as it was (or about to be) displayed on earth at that time in ways of divine mercy, but forbears even to close the sentence where the part following alludes to His exercise of judicial wrath. Such was in no way the object of His first coming: and so, if strange in appearance, with divine wisdom He read no more. "The day of vengeance of our God" awaits the epoch of His appearing in power and glory.

It is not that mercy will not then be the spring of God's way with Israel. For Jehovah while He executes earthly judgment, will comfort those that mourn, especially mourners in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he might be glorified." (Ver. 3.) Restoration of past decayed places shall go forward (ver. 4); strangers shall serve Israel (ver. 5), who shall themselves be named the priests of Jehovah. (Ver. 6.) For their shame they should have not merely reinstatement of what had lapsed but double, like Job; and Jehovah who loves judgment will make an everlasting covenant with them; so that all who see acknowledge that they are indeed the blessed of Jehovah. (Ver. 7—9.) Nay more, Jehovah Himself becomes the centre of

all joy and the giver of all beauty, causing righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (Ver. 10, 11.)

The Spirit of Christ is importunate in intercession for Zion, as we see in the beginning of chapter lxii. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Ver. 1—4.) Land and people are bound up in the plans and affections of Jehovah. And this will prove a divine ground of patriotism for Israel. "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Ver. 5.) And as the Spirit of Christ working in the prophet bears witness of the unceasing cry to Jehovah to effect His glorious counsels as to Jerusalem (ver. 6, 7); so Jehovah on His part "hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness." (Ver. 8, 9.)

Hence the animation of verse 10: "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." The day of Jehovah is there; He the Messiah is there, the salvation of Zion's daughter—His reward with Him, and His work before Him. So Jehovah proclaims to the end of

the world as His message to her. (Ver. 11.) On the other hand, "they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of Jehovah: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." (Ver. 12.)

"Happy people that is in such a case; happy people whose God is Jehovah."

CHAPTER LXIII. 1—6.

THESE verses connect themselves with the close of chapter lxii., following up the coming of the Messiah as the Deliverer of Zion, no longer forsaken but sought out, and all her dispersed children now gathered in with a most vivid sight, as it were, of His return from executing vengeance on their Gentile foes. The scene of the slaughter is laid in the land of Edom and the City of Bozrah. Horsley I consider quite wrong in denying any mention of these places here, while admitting them in chapter xxxiv. He would translate the proper names as appellatives thus: “Who is this that approacheth all in scarlet, with garments stained from the vintage? This that is glorious,” &c. But this able man had overlooked the chapter just referred to, where the scene demands the proper names. This consideration, in my judgment, gives conclusive support to the ordinary translation.

But commentators in general contradict each other without being able to strike out divine light from the words of the prophet. Thus Origen, Theodoret, Tertullian, and Jerome, may illustrate views which have too long prevailed, so far as to lead the compilers of the English Common Prayer to read it for the Epistle on the Monday before Easter. They actually regard the scene as prophetic of the Saviour suffering for our sins, instead of seeing in it the Avenger of His long-oppressed Israel; as a pledge of mercy, not as a threat of judgment. Hence the good Bishop of Cyprus thinks the prophet here points out Jehovah's ascent to heaven, lays stress on Edom as the red land, connects the pierced side and blood and water with the blood-stained garments; and sees the destruction of the devil and all his host in the treading of the winepress. Calvin justly objects to such a perversion of the prophecy; but he is quite as far from the true mark as any when he proceeds to apply it not to Christ, but simply to God Himself as such in His dealings of old with

the Edomites, and other enemies of His people, when He broke them by the Assyrians of old. This is to make the word of private, isolated, interpretation, dislocating it from its true aim and scopé in the illustration of the glory of the Lord Jesus, not at His first advent, but when He comes again. Luther's notion is strange enough: he regards it as a prediction of the punishment of the Jews or Synagogue, not an infliction on their enemies for their rescue in the latter day. The Jew, as is commonly known, conceives that the divine wrath which impends over Rome, as the full meaning of the enemy here named Edom, is the real thought. Bishop Lowth rightly combats Grotius' hypothesis that Judas Maccabæus and his victories make the subject of it; or the subsequent exploits of John Hyrcanus, his brother Simon's son. "It may be asked [he adds], to whom, and to what event does it relate? I can only answer, that I know of no event in history to which, from its importance and circumstances, it can be applied, unless perhaps to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity; which in the Gospel is called the coming of Christ and the days of vengeance. Matt. xvi. 28; Luke xxi. 22." This suffices to prove the bewilderment of Christian writers down to our times, which is yet more confessed by some, like the last, owning that "there is no necessity of supposing that it has been already accomplished." Vitrunga, as usual, is more sober than the mass; but there seems to be no good reason for treating, as he does, the local references as mystical; for when this great day arrives, the world will behold a wonderful reappearance, not of Israel only, but of their ancient rivals and enemies, which, like the ten tribes, men of the world assume to be for ever extinct. It will be the day of reckoning for the nations, and the end will righteously answer to the beginning. At any rate there is nothing valid enough to set aside the plain mention of these localities, nor the fact of an utter overthrow of the Gentile enemies of Israel there.

But the great truth which is overlooked by almost all is, that it is no question of the heavenly church, but of the earthly people, Israel. The church is removed from the scene by grace

to meet the Lord, and be with Him in the Father's house, though surely also to appear with Him in glory and to reign with Him over the earth. But not such is the character of the deliverance of Israel; and of this Isaiah treats, like the Old Testament in general. It is by the execution on earth of judgments, which have for their object the salvation of the Jews and the destruction of their enemies. This accordingly accounts for terms, which are hard indeed to be explained when men think of the church in these verses. Believe that Israel is there, and what more proper than such a description of their Deliverer, as "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save," or "The day of vengeance is in my heart?" Is this the way we think of His love to us or His attitude even to the world while we are passing through? How can verses 5, 6 apply to Him as Head of the church? Bring in the question of Israel delivered for His kingdom here below, and all is consistent and clear.

It is then the Lord, Jehovah-Messiah, who is here seen, in the prophetic vision, returning victorious from the spot which more than one prophecy declares to be the theatre of the wrath which shall be poured out unsparingly on the foes of His people. "Who is this," asks the prophet, identifying himself with the people, "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" His answer (for it assumes the form of a dialogue) is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Wherefore," asks Isaiah again, "art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" "I have trodden," answers He, "the wine-press alone: and of the people[s] there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down

their strength to the earth." Manifestly it is no picture of Christ forsaken of God nor even rejected of man, but of *His* treading down the opposed nations, as grapes in a wine-press. It is not infinite love suffering infinitely that sin might be judged, and God glorified about it, and thence able to justify the believer from all things. It is One trampling down in fury, and the blood of His enemies sprinkling His garments, not His blood washing them in divine grace. It is not the day of grace but of vengeance, though along with it the year of His redeemed is come when the scattered and peeled people shall be brought to Zion with everlasting joy on their heads. *Now* it is the day of salvation for the Gentiles, who believe, while wrath to the uttermost is come on the Jews who believe not.

CHAPTERS LXIII. 7—LXIV.

THE last section brought together at its beginning the Lord's first advent, at its end His second advent, with Jerusalem as the special object here contemplated in His earthly plans. We now enter on the closing part of this great and varied prophecy. There are two divisions in it. The first, that which affords us our present theme (from ver. 7 of chap. lxiii. to the end of chap. lxiv.), consists of a most urgent intercession by the Spirit in the mouth of the prophet on behalf of Israel with Jehovah. The second is His answer, which carries us to the end of the book.

Even the least enlightened of modern commentators admits that we open with what seems designed as a formulary of humiliation for the Israelites in order to their restoration. "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah, and the praises of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Ver. 7—9.)

Nothing is more suitable than this exordium, whether one thinks of the Lord first or His people next. Mercies acknowledged lead to fresh mercy. He was not changed in His lovingkindness, nor they in their deep need of it, as only He could show it to them. Hitherto His love had received no return, nothing but bitter disappointment.* Yet what could

* It may be well to remark that verse 9 is by no means certain for the reading or sense. Our translation followed the Keri, others (as the Vulgate,

exceed His tender care? “But they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.” (Ver. 10—14.)

It is evident then that God will work morally in Israel. No external deliverances for themselves nor execution of vengeance on His and their foes will suffice for His great purposes, any more than for His own glory or their real good. Hence the Spirit will exercise them in confession and in supplication before Him. As the verses already looked at set out their ingratitude and selfwill in presence of His unmerited goodness, so the next takes the form of prayer. “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Jehovah art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. O Jehovah, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants’ sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never

the Syriac, the Targum of Jonathan, &c., and of moderns, Houbigant, Rosenmüller, Horsley, De Wette, &c.) follow the Ketib. This would give properly, I suppose, “in all their straits he was not straitened.” The Septuagint, followed by the Arabic, contrasts His personal interest and action. “It was not an ambassador nor an angel, but He Himself saved them,” &c.

barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." (Ver. 15—19.)

They are broken in heart and turn in affiance of spirit to Jehovah. Had *He* of old said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie? Now *they* say, Surely thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Yet do they own that there had been judicial hardening over them, erst over Pharaoh and his people. How deep and persevering the sins that could turn Jehovah against His own people as against their enemies of old! and this too so long! for Israel had enjoyed their inheritance but a little while: long, long had their adversaries trodden down Jehovah's sanctuary, and Israel had been as those on whom His name was not called.

This leads out the heart in still more earnestness. "Look down from heaven" suffices no more. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! when thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Ver. 1—4.)

It is interesting here to note the great difference for which the accomplishment of redemption gives occasion by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Compare 1 Corinthians ii. We see that God now *does* reveal the things He has prepared for them that love Him. *We* do not wait for the emergence of the great High Priest to know our blessedness; for while He is still in the holiest, the Holy Spirit, as the apostle teaches, has come out and given us to enter in as anointed of Him and made free to go boldly within the veil. Indeed for us the veil is rent, and all things hidden are revealed. But Israel (and the prophet speaks of Israel) must wait till they see Him whom their

fathers so guiltily pierced, though I doubt not their heart will be truly converted to Jehovah, born again but not in peace till they actually behold Him.

Hence we have in what follows the language of true repentance. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways : behold, thou art wroth ; for we have sinned : in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee : for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Jehovah, thou art our father ; we are the clay, and thou our potter ; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever : behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire : and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah ? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore ?”
(Ver. 5—12.)

CHAPTER LXV.

THIS chapter begins the answer of Jehovah to the appeal of His people, in which He explains not only what is now an accomplished fact, but also what is still going on. "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." (Ver. 1, 2.) The last two verses of Romans x. leave no ground for hesitation as to their bearing. They furnish an inspired comment on our opening verses, and prove beyond controversy that the first intimates the call of the Gentiles which is now proceeding, as the second is the aggrieved witness on God's part of that which gave occasion to their call—the rebelliousness of His ancient people Israel. It is an enemy's work to slight the New Testament use of the passage, as is done by rationalists in order to limit the prophecy to the Jews of the times before and after the Babylonish captivity. Besides, what can be more inconsistent with the evident contrast at the same epoch between verses 1 and 2? The inspired application we might never, unaided, have discovered; but, once made, it approves itself to the spiritual understanding at once as exactly tallying with notorious facts. Grace is sovereign and goes out now to those who never so much as looked for it—to the ungodly Gentiles who had till now stood in no recognized relationship with God. But in turning from Israel, God was entirely justified by their iniquities: after all their advantages, His name had been blasphemed among the Gentiles through the chosen people. Most gracious was He then in calling from among the Gentiles; most righteous in discarding the Jew. This Jehovah proceeds to prove by a detail of Israel's insulting wickedness in verses 3—5: "A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacri-

ficeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day."

It has been objected by some that these idolatries and superstitions, covered over with hypocritical affectation of holiness, did not occur after the return from Babylon. But we must not forget that the Holy Ghost in prophecy deals with the evils then existing or in progress, the judgment of which is not met by providential chastisement, such as the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar. Just as the idolatry of the wilderness was only checked from time to time, but not judged fully till the nation was carried into captivity beyond Damascus (Amos v.); so these evil ways which Isaiah describes did not meet with adequate condemnation till God turned the stream of His calling into other channels. The principle indeed is fully confirmed by the use our Lord (John xii.) and the Spirit (Acts xxviii.) make of Isaiah vi. The judicial sentence so long suspended from the days of the prophet only fell in the gospel times. It is just so here. But we must bear in mind what we have seen already, that idolatry is to revive in the latter days, when the Jews settle themselves in their land before the Lord comes, judging the evil and establishing the good in order to His millennial reign.

I cannot but think too that the closing words of this divine censure intimate the long patience of God; so that, flatter themselves as they might that He did not heed the character of their misdeeds like themselves, judgment would at length demonstrate, that, however loath to break silence, He will recompence the iniquities of both fathers and children. "Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompence, even recompence into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom." (Ver. 6, 7.)

This might seem to threaten total and hopeless ruin to the ancient people. But no: God had promised; and the unfaithfulness of the people, however surely judged, cannot make void the promises of grace. Hence in verses 8—10 God proceeds to make known, not the bringing in of the Gentiles during Israel's temporary excision from the olive tree of promise and testimony on earth, but the reservation of a portion, the germ of a nation, blessed and a blessing, from Jacob and Judah, according to His early pledges to their fathers. “Thus saith Jehovah, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.”

Then in verses 11—16 Jehovah contrasts the apostates and the elect of the people, the idol-worshippers and His own servants, with their respective destinies. “But ye are they that forsake Jehovah, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith Jehovah God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for Jehovah God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from

mine eyes." The old evil will be judged at the close; just as inquisition for all righteous blood will then be made. It is a time of judgment which ushers in days of unparalleled enjoyment for this earth: that is, it is the end of this age, and the dawn of a new one when former troubles are forgotten.

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Ver. 17—19.) The true key to this is that the predicted change from present things begins at the commencement of the day of the Lord and is only complete before that day gives place to eternity. This alone, as it seems to me, will be found to reconcile all the scriptures which treat of the subject. So in Christ the Christian can even now say that "old things are passed away: behold all things are become new;" while in fact this will only be literally verified when he is changed into His image at His coming. Just so the beginning of the day of the Lord will be an incipient accomplishment of "new heavens and a new earth," when Jehovah creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; but the absolute fulfilment awaits the close of the millennial day, when to the letter all things shall be made new, the earth and heavens that now are being not shaken only but dissolved, the sea for ever gone, and a new heaven and a new earth appearing, wherein righteousness shall dwell, and God shall be all in all. The New Testament naturally dwells on the full issue ultimately involved in the prophecy, as we may see in 2 Peter iii. and in Revelation xxi. 1—8. But the Jewish prophet, as naturally, was led of the Spirit to dwell on the earliest pledge of this blessing in its dawn on the land and capital and people of Israel.

That Isaiah does embrace this earlier phase as bearing on the Jews and Jerusalem will be manifest to every attentive reader. For the entire description here suits the millennium rather than eternity. I have already pointed out the special

place of Jerusalem and her people. Now this of itself suffices to prove it; for though the new Jerusalem possesses an eternal character of special glory, the New Testament is explicit that on the new earth all such distinctions as an earthly city or people melt away for eternity.

Next, verse 20 is decisive against the notion. For death is not wholly extinct in the state of things prominently before our prophet. It is exceptional, but still exists as an instrument of judicial infliction. Man will then fill his days, which he has never yet done—not even before the flood—no, not even Methuselah himself. Not one as yet has stretched across ten centuries. This will be the rule for the righteous who are found alive on earth when the Lord reigns for the thousand years. So thoroughly will death be not the rule but the exception that one dying a hundred years old will be but a child; and even so he that dies at a hundred years will be a sinner under some express curse. In eternity death will not exist.

Again, it is written here that “they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.” (Ver. 21—25.) Now, sweet and worthy of God as all this is, it is not heavenly nor eternal in the full sense, though an earnest of final blessedness. It is God’s vindication of His character on earth and of His faithful promises to Israel there, when power shall be on the side of righteousness, and the works of the devil shall be manifestly destroyed here below. Not even disappointment shall be known, for before men call Jehovah will answer and will hear

while they speak. And the long-groaning earth, freed from its travail, shall yield her increase. The very beasts shall share the general joy, with one solemn and marked exception. Did the enemy of God and man choose one animal to be the vehicle of his temptation with the mother of all men? Even in the otherwise universal joy God cannot forget this, and would have men also to remember it when that active spirit of evil is debarred from his ravages. So if "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together," and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, none the less shall dust be the serpent's meat. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah."

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE concluding chapter of our prophet pursues what was begun in chapter lxv.—the answer of Jehovah to the supplication which precedes them both.

“Thus saith Jehovah, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made.” (Ver. 1, 2.) It is not that God did not accept the house which king David desired, and his son Solomon was given to erect for His glory. It is not that He will not have a sanctuary in the midst of Israel in the glorious land; for He has revealed it minutely, with the feasts, sacrifices, and appurtenances, by Ezekiel. (Chaps. xl.—xlvi.) But it is another thing when His people rest in the sanctuary, as of old in the ark to their own shame and discomfiture before their enemies. So it was when the Lord left the temple—no longer God’s but *their* house, and left to them desolate, Himself its true glory being despised and rejected. So Stephen charged home on them these very words. (Acts vii. 48—50.) It was not he, nor Luke, but Isaiah who declared that the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands: and this in full view of the exceeding magnifical temple which Solomon built. Heaven is His throne, earth is His footstool. What can man do worthily for Him to rest in? He needs nothing from man’s resources! His own hand has made all these things, in comparison with which man’s greatest exertions are puny indeed. Once more among the Jews at the end of the age shall be the state of things which draws out this rebuke of their own prophet. Trusting in the house that they are at length allowed to build in Jerusalem, they must prove afresh that an unbelieving idolatrous heart desecrates a temple, and that not thus can sin be settled between God and the sinner. Earthly splendour in such circumstances is but gilding over iniquity. It is real hypocrisy.

"And all those things have been, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Ver. 2.) Thus the line is drawn here as before between a godly remnant, and the people apostate as a whole. Hence their oblations are vain. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." (Ver. 3.) The English Bible follows the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic, as well as the Chaldee paraphrase. Houbigant, Bishop Lowth, Horsley, De Wette, &c., omit the terms of comparison (inserted in italics in the A. V.), which in their judgment mar the true sense. Their translation makes the verse to intimate the combination of ritual observance with open wickedness and Gentile abominations. Otherwise the statement is that their impiety made their acts of worship to be so many horrors.

In either view they had chosen their own path of self-will and disregard of God for the evils they loved; but God's retribution would not be wanting. (See ver. 4.) "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not." No delusions among the nations were more complete than Israel's have been and are yet to be; and the evils they dreaded, and sacrificed all to avoid, were just what befel them, and must till the end come. Did they refuse the Messiah? They have been a prey to false Messiahs, and shall yet bow down to the Antichrist. Did they own no king but Cæsar? In Cæsar they found a destroyer. Did they fear the Romans would come and take away their place and nation? All the world knows how punctually their fear was accomplished; and yet the end is not. Greater abominations shall be seen in them; greater delusions, greater fears, and a greater fulfilment. The abomination of desolation of which the Saviour spoke (citing not Daniel xi. 31, which was then

past, but Daniel xii. 11, which is still future) must yet be set where it ought not, in the sanctuary at Jerusalem; and then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It is impossible to interpret either Matthew xxiv., or Daniel xii., or our chapter, of the Roman siege: but the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let Jehovah be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies." (Ver. 5—14.)

Thus no longer by testimony to the heart, but by manifest judgment will Jehovah decide between cattle and cattle. The infidel scoff, which so long harassed the heavenly people, will then be put to shame among the poor in spirit of the earthly

people. Jehovah will be glorified to the joy of such as trembled at His word before He appears, to the eternal infamy of those who knew Him not and doubted His interest in His despised confessors here below. For Christ and for the church, they were raised or changed and taken on high, leaving the world without a blow or even a notice. But it will not be so for the Jew by and by : "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies." The Roman destruction is no adequate fulfilment of this: but it shall be fulfilled to the letter of many prophecies. (Compare Isaiah xviii. 3—7; ix. 3—5; xxix.; Zech. xiv. 1—4.) And then shall follow the new birth or ingathering of Zion's children, no longer to be Abraham's seed alone but his children in deed and in truth. As nothing of the kind followed the capture by Nebuchadnezzar, no more did it ensue when Titus took Jerusalem. No outpouring of vengeance on the guilty city, followed by blessing unexampled for fulness and without sorrow, has as yet appeared to satisfy the terms of the prediction. Sudden as it will be, it will also be permanent. It will be the day of Jehovah when man's and Israel's sad history is to be reversed; and those who loved and mourned for Jerusalem shall rejoice for her and share the rich results of her blessedness. Yet is it in no way the character of gospel joy which blends inward comfort by the Spirit's power with shame and sorrow and rejection in the world. Here contrariwise, "when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb, and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, and *his indignation toward his enemies.*" It is the future day, not of grace and salvation only, as it is to-day, but of vengeance also, when Jehovah will not stop the words as once He did on earth. Then He was proclaiming the acceptable year of Jehovah and this only. By and by He will proclaim and accomplish both that year and the day of vengeance. For this is in His heart, and the year of His redeemed is come. Both will be fulfilled then without let or delay. It will be the introduction of His day, and of the millennial reign.

"For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh : and the slain of Jehovah shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith Jehovah. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory." (Ver. 15—18.) The efforts of ancient and modern commentators to apply this passage, like the rest, to gospel times, are desperate but vain. It is unequivocally a day of judgment, not the glad tidings of salvation by His grace; it is His revelation from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and on them that obey not the gospel. It is evident that the Jews in that day will not only set up their ritual again, but be addicted to heathen abominations. It is the day of divine recompense, when old evils will revive and amalgamate with novel iniquities, that all may come before Jehovah in judgment, and a new era dawn on both Jew and Gentile over the earth now purged. It will be a question then not of believing the grace of God, but of seeing the glory of Jehovah that is to be revealed.

"And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto Jehovah out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah." (Ver. 19, 20.) Vitrunga's argument on verse 19, that no future call of Gentiles can be here intended, because those named have long since known the God of Israel, seems to me of no real force. For

even Christendom will then be in a state of apostasy (2 Thess. ii.); and, besides, the hearing of Jehovah's fame and seeing His glory refers to the manifestation of Himself that will then be made here below.

Thus an unsparing divine judgment will be executed on all the gathered nations when the Jews are dealt with in their pollutions; and those that escape of them will be sent of God to the distant nations ignorant of what He has wrought. Gentiles bring back all the Jews remaining outside the Holy Land. It is, I suppose, the detail of the prediction in chapter xviii. 7. From all nations shall this offering to Jehovah be brought, and by every means of conveyance. Before this it will have been only the Jews and not all Israel.

All this seems to me not the same as the gospel or its effects, but in the most certain and evident contrast with it. The offering now is characteristically of the Gentiles, as we see in Romans xv. 16, and as experience shews. Jews are no doubt now as ever converted, but they are comparatively rare. The prophet contemplates the day when all Israel shall be saved, when the apostates have been surprised by the divine judgment. And as to any supposed difficulty of reconciling with John iv. 21 Jerusalem as a centre for all nations, it is imaginary, or rather depends on the confusion of the hour that now is with the day that shall be. Our Lord was contemplating the time of His rejection and His approaching absence in heaven; the prophet had in view the day of His glory for the earth. Distinguish the times, and the objection vanishes. Jerusalem has no place in the Christian system; in the coming day of Jehovah it will have a greater and holier place than it ever had of old.

Hence it is obvious that the ordinary strain of argument and interpretation, popular from the days of Origen and Jerome down to the present, is founded on a total confusion of things that differ. Christianity no doubt is very distinct; but that the new age must be a repetition of the same aims, principles, and ways, is an error quite as great as that which fancies the gospel to be only a continuation of the law. Israel shall be established for ever before the Lord. "For as the new heavens

and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah." (Ver. 22, 23.) There is no solid reason for doubting the literal bearing of the prediction. New moons and sabbaths shall once more figure in the worship of Jehovah; but it will be no more so contracted as of old, for "all flesh" shall share in it, though (from other scriptures we may gather) on no such exalted ground or such nearness to the King as His chosen people. His house shall be literally a house of prayer for all people, which will in no way hinder the greatness of His name among the Gentiles, or the offering of incense to it, or a pure offering in every place.

And as His honour is thus maintained, so is His fear. Not only shall there be an awful outpouring of wrath on His adversaries at the end of this age, but Jehovah will keep up a salutary warning nigh the very spot where His glory dwells. "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Ver. 24.) There is nothing really obscure in this, save to those who regard the passage from a Christian point of view. In its own connection it is most simple, solemn, and expressive.

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